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THE CHANGING ROLES OF PARENTS
IN A MIDDLE CLASS COMMUNITY

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for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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ABSTRACT

Our society has a rhetoric of equality which has spread through all areas highlighting or sometimes concealing manifest inequalities. In the context of marriage the language of equality suggests that marriage is becoming a more equal partnership and that bringing up children is becoming a similar experience for both parents.

In this study this suggestion of increasing equality, especially increasing paternal involvement with children was investigated in the small community known locally as the 'Denton Estate'. This is a middle class community and traditionally the middle class have considered themselves in the vanguard of changes regarding good childcare practice.

The context and history of present patterns of family life is the first part of the study considering how motherhood and fatherhood have changed over time to become the kinds of institutions they are today. The present social context has also been considered as the caring and nurturing of children demands both time and money and these are usually organised in ways which reflect the pre-existent patterns of society. Few families are isolated from society and its influence and this is certainly not the case on the 'Denton Estate'.

The study goes on to look at the organisation of motherhood and fatherhood. If there are 'new fathers' participating fully in the care of their children then there must also be new mothers with the time and energy to pursue careers out in the world. Is this the case in this community?

The study took place in the community as a whole and focused on interviews with 24 families both two parent and one parent families to understand the father's and mother's role. It became clear that the lives of men and women remain very different and part of the work investigates

how mothers and fathers spend their time and set priorities. Another aspect of the study was to look at the way people described their lives to see how differences and inequalities are explained and justified.

Later chapter reflect on grandparents' lives to see how changes have been made by this generation of parents compared to the last generation. Also to see how the lives of people in this community relate to or have been influenced by their own treatment as children.

This study, then, is a reflection on the possible changes in parenthood in this community and a consideration of issues about equality and what equality in the family might mean.

CONTENTS

<u>INTRODUCTION</u>	1
The Family	4
A Statistical Picture of Life in Britain	3
Family Research	6
Fatherhood Research	7
Fathers and Divorce	8
Fathers and Babycare Books	12
The Changing Role of Fathers	13
This Study	19
Notes	21
 <u>CHAPTER 1 - PERSPECTIVES ON THE FAMILY</u>	
Introduction	22
<u>Part I</u> - The History and Context of Family Life	26
Motherhood	27
Fatherhood	31
Summary	34
<u>Part II</u> - Family Life in Britain Today	35
Perspectives on Parenthood	36
Fathers	38
Power and Decision Making	42
The Lower Position of Women	45
Family Money	46
Time and Tasks	48
Marriage, Divorce and the Law	51
Sexuality	54
Summary	60
Notes	62
 <u>CHAPTER 2 - THEORETICAL POSSIBILITIES</u>	63
Post-War Sociology	65
Marx and the Socialist Feminists	69
Freud and Psychoanalytic Perspectives on the Family and Gender	74
Psychopathology of Everyday Life	78
Post Freudian Debates on the Family and the Role of Women	80
Sexual Inequality and Class	84
Female Psychology	89
Conclusion	94
Notes	97
 <u>CHAPTER 3 - THE ANALYSIS OF ACCOUNTS</u>	98
Power	100
Language	103
The Nature of Masculinity and Femininity	107
The Family	108
This Study	111
Theories of Class	112
The New Middle Class	112
The People	117
The Process of Research	121

Research Method - Ethnography	124
Analysing and Selecting Data for Presentation	130
Notes	133
Table of Characteristics of Some Members of the Middle Class Community of the Denton Estate - Mothers at Home	134
Table of Characteristics of Some Members of the Middle Class Community of the Denton Estate - Single Parents	137
 <u>CHAPTER 4 - INTRODUCTION TO THE RESEARCH</u>	
<u>MATERIAL</u>	138
My Perspectives as I Began the Study of This Community	138
The Area	141
The Lifestyle	141
Local Schools	142
Local Politics and Local Organisations	144
The House	146
Friendship	148
The People	148
Grandparents	149
Education	149
 <u>CHAPTER 5 - IDEAS ABOUT PARENTHOOD AND</u>	
<u>FAMILY LIFE ON THE DENTON ESTATE</u>	151
Commitment to Family Life	151
Parenthood and Different Expectations	158
 <u>CHAPTER 6 - MOTHERHOOD</u>	165
Introduction	165
1. Why Have Children?	166
2. What Does Mothering Include	176
Providing a Resource for the Family	177
The Household Chores	179
How Was this Allocation of Domestic Responsibility Decided	181
Housework Expands in All Directions	184
Emotional Commitment	185
Men and Women: Different Lives	186
3. Guilt and Anxiety	189
Guilt and the Full-time Mother	189
Guilt and the Employed Mother	191
Feeling Like a Failure	193
Finding Support	194
4. Decisions about Staying at Home or Going to Paid Work	195
Women's Employment	197
Single Parent Mothers	198
The Problems of Paid Employment	199
Supportive Husbands	203
Childcare Problems	207
Self-Esteem	208
Returning to Paid Work	212
Summary	215

Josephine and Barry	332
Martin and Maria	337
Janet and Jeffrey	339
Carole and Raymond	342
Hazel and Harry	345
Kate and Gerald	346
2. Money	350
3. Decision Making/Arguments	362
4. Expert Advice	372
5. Sexuality	378
6. Law - Divorce	384
Case Studies	
a) Neil and Tess	385
b) Sandra and Paul	388
c) Brenda and Max	390
d) Jo and Barry	391
e) Janet and Jeffrey	393
Summary	395
Conclusion	396
 <u>CHAPTER 9 - LEARNING FROM PARENTS</u>	 399
Case Studies	
The Women	
a) Rose: the lessons of poverty	400
b) Kate: 'affluent paternalism', living out father's expectations	403
c) Hazel: understanding her mother's life	405
d) Peggy: retreat from mother	409
e) Josephine: wanting everything	412
Conclusion	414
The Men	416
a) Barry: 'a different kind of father'	416
b) Martin: a womanly father	418
c) Jeffrey: dominant father and servile mother	421
d) Gerald: admiring his dad	423
e) Chris: life in a fish shop	425
f) Dennis: a witness to his father's breakdown	428
Conclusion	431
Narratives	431
 <u>CHAPTER 10 - THE LANGUAGE OF EQUALITY</u>	 436
Men's Language	440
Different Lives	442
Women's Language	444
Depression	445
Women and Marriage	447
Women's Talk	448
Men's Talk	448
 <u>CHAPTER 11 - CONCLUSION</u>	 450
 BIBLIOGRAPHY	 454

INTRODUCTION

This dissertation is concerned with the contradiction between the values of equality and justice to which allegiance is expressed in many sections of our society, and the continuing position of women in most areas of life as the social and political inferiors of men.

Despite twenty years of feminist analysis and the accelerating social awareness of issues about sex equality, the lives of men and women remain visibly different. Many women are still at home undertaking childcare tasks and domestic service, and most men are at work. Of course this is not the whole picture. Some men are unemployed and many women are employed, albeit often in part-time and low paid work (1). However the knot which ties women to domesticity does not seem to have been substantially loosened. In Chapter One I shall discuss evidence of the multitude of discriminatory practices, both implicit and explicit, which confine women to certain jobs and lower levels of pay. This, combined with the assumption that women are responsible for domesticity and childcare, means that women's promotion prospects are less promising than men's.

Despite the continuing discrimination, there is an increasing awareness about sexual inequalities, and this has led to the development of a language of equality, job advertisements may no longer specify the gender of the person required. But however encouraging the changes in the language may be, they are often cosmetic in the face of deep seated prejudice. Progress towards an egalitarian society has proceeded quite slowly and one only need to look at Britain's favourite paper to see that sexual stereotypes continue to be well entrenched.

The language of equality has extended into marriage which is also increasingly viewed as an egalitarian undertaking; I shall later look at

some of the literature which has promoted marriage as an ideal of companionship, mutuality and equality. Much of the language of equality was generated by the Equal Opportunities Act of 1975, when it became illegal to discriminate on grounds of sex in employment and education and the Equal Opportunities Commission was intended to help to support the Sex Discrimination and Equal Pay Act.

The Equal Pay Act highlighted the disparity between male and female earnings and work conditions and helped to raise social consciousness about discrimination. Since 1975 discussions of sex stereotyping in children's books, male dominated language and discrimination in job advertisements have been part of the debate on equality between the sexes. Initially the Act was interpreted so loosely that justification for paying men and women differently remained an organising principle of labour, and even now very few cases actually come to court (2).

This discrepancy between the rhetoric of equality and the reality of life in a gendered society forms the main dynamic for the work reported here. In this introduction, I want to look at the relative positions of women and men in British society, using government statistics. I then want to reflect on the family and consider some of the indicators of changes in family life and parenthood since the war. Many of these issues will be discussed more fully throughout this work, but initially I hope to show that there is a problem concerning social rhetoric about equality and women's continuing inequality which is reinforced by their role as mothers. This chapter will undertake a brief and therefore selective description of the current state of family life, family law and family research, to indicate that many issues relating to social inequality between the sexes have hardly been tackled. Later chapters will look at some of these issues in greater detail.

A Statistical Picture of Life in Britain

About 52% of the population of Britain is female but this majority has nothing like the power, influence and wealth of the male minority. The differentiation process begins early. In the government statistics for 1987 education is already seen to be an area where the sex of an individual structures their life's chances. Seventeen percent of all men have continued into higher education compared to 14% of all women (MacKinnon & Statham 1989). Very few of these women are scientists (Kelly 1978).

Although more girls have been encouraged into sciences, those pupils remaining into the sixth form are more likely to make stereotyped choices with "arts subjects being 'girls' subjects' and maths and sciences (other than biology) being 'boys' subjects'" (MacKinnon and Statham 1989). The reasons for this are complex and may relate not only to teaching methods but to teacher expectations (Kelly 1978).

After compulsory education ends the differences become greater. In the Education Fact Book MacKinnon and Statham discuss how men dominate in higher education, although women are increasingly going on to higher education.

"Participation in higher education also shows overall differences between the sexes, though here it is men who predominate. In 1984/5, there were 547,000 men and 362,000 women in higher education in the United Kingdom (full- and part-time, university and LEA sectors). However, the gap between the sexes is narrowing: there has been a 77% increase since 1970/1 in the number of women in higher education, compared with a 31% increase in the number of men (Government Statistical Service, 1986, Table 5)." MacKinnon & Statham 1989

This male domination becomes extreme at higher degree level. In 1984 16,000 men gained higher degrees as compared to 6,000 women (MacKinnon & Statham 1989).

Employment

Although the trend is for married women to return to employment after childbirth, 37% of all married women were economically inactive (Social Trends, 1988, p.70). This is an average, and ethnic groups vary in the likelihood of female employment, with Bangladeshi and Pakistani women less likely to be employed than white women or Afro-Caribbean women.

While there has been an increase in women's employment, especially part-time employment, women's earnings were well below those of men. As 'Social Trends' reports:

"The large difference in average earnings for full-time working women compared with full-time working men is still very evident in 1986. For example a full-time woman manual worker could expect, on average, to earn only 62 percent of a full-time male manual worker's wages" (Social Trends, 1988, p.84).

Although the patterns of employment are changing, this is not the same as increasing moves towards 'equality'. The latter would imply that the lives of men and women are becoming more similar and there is very little evidence to support that suggestion.

The Family

The family is changing just as every other aspect of social life around it. According to the General Household Survey, the proportion of 'traditional families' (ie. a married couple with children) has fallen between 1972 and 1985 from 76 to 69 percent of all families. There are an increasing number of children brought up in single parent families, usually living with the mother (Social Trends, 1988, p.38).

Possibly because of the rise in numbers of single parent families, Margaret Thatcher's government has encouraged a resurgence of political interest in the traditional family. The Conservative Government has been

eager to bolster the family, especially the role of the mother. She is traditionally the unpaid caretaker for husband, children and the elderly. Cuts in government spending appear to reinforce these traditional roles, in at least two ways. First, cuts often mean that women must take responsibility for caring for disabled or elderly family members who return home. This is also the case for the chronically sick who cannot be accommodated in hospital. This work is often unrecognised as real work. Clare Ungerson suggests this is because women are seen as carers by nature:

"The reason for this lack of recognition is that, like housework, informal caring takes place in the 'private domain' where the sexual division of labour is still imbued with naturalism or functionalism" (Ungerson 1982).

Second, the possibilities for returning to paid employment while children go to a nursery school have diminished, as nursery places are increasingly difficult to find in the public sector for under-fours. Private nursery care is usually expensive and must be weighed against the amount the woman can earn.

Helen Penn writes that even at its height, nursery provision was very limited, and has been further curtailed by Conservative expenditure cuts.

"At its peak nursery provision amounted to just over one place in a day nursery, one place in a nursery school and three and a half places in nursery classes per 100 children" (Penn 1982).

This is despite the pressure from mothers for childcare in early years, the extent of which was shown by a Policy Studies Institute survey published in 1979. They suggested that women wanted childcare as a priority. Increased help with childcare rated

"far and above any other change that women would like to see to help them remain at work through childbearing and childrearing years" (Daniles 1980).

However there are clearly heavy restraints on women continuing an uninterrupted work pattern even if they wanted to. These restraints help to mould women into a continuing domestic role ensuring that although the family is changing, women largely continue to care for children and all other family members.

Family Research

Family research has reflected the changing family although it has been a rather unprestigious branch of sociology (3). Traditional sociological enquiry largely neglected women's experience, and accepted the dominant ideology of the family at face value as explanations of how the family operated. This was especially true of functionalism, which I shall discuss in greater detail in the next chapter. In 1988 'the family' continues to be an area of small independent research projects by individuals, because finding funding has always been a problem for family research. The Government funds some research but these studies do not offer a fundamental critique of received ideas about the family. Such work as 'The Symmetrical Family' (Willmott and Young 1972) and the research by the Rapoports (1977) have been a focus of interest for family research within sociology but most critical work has taken place outside sociology in a wider political debate.

Above all the resurgence of the women's movement in the late 1960s meant that the family became a central issue for feminist writers. The slogan "the personal is political" directed feminists to the heart of family relations. A concern with unravelling the private nature of family life to make women's lives and labour more visible resulted in work on marriage and domesticity. Feminist writers consciously took up the themes

which previously had been largely ignored. Such work as Ann Oakley's studies of 'Housework' brought women's experiences into sociology almost for the first time (Oakley 1983).

If sociological work largely failed to realise that the interests of family members are not necessarily all the same, this can hardly be said to be true of other related disciplines such as psychology, where the dynamics of the mother-child relationship and the conflicts and tensions within it have occupied a central space. Here the family has remained the backdrop to this maternal drama, expressing the deeply held commitment to family life, within both the psychoanalytic and behaviourist traditions. Interest in motherhood has resulted in a tremendous volume of writing over the last forty years. Although the motherhood research does not abate, increasingly fathers and their relationship with their children are becoming another focus for family research. Most recently some of this work has implied both an interchangeable androgyny in parental relationships with children and an expanding time commitment made by fathers to childrearing.

Fatherhood Research

Recent work on fatherhood suggests that parental roles are changing with fathers becoming increasingly involved in the day to day care of their children. The encouragement for men to participate fully in childrearing and view themselves as parents has been seen as a positive move towards sexual equality and the beginning of a "gentle revolution" (McKee and O'Brian, 1982) in relationships between the sexes. This is understood as a genuine response towards the demands of the women's movement because this greater participation in some aspects of domesticity means that men are more involved in the home and possibly more responsive to the demands of

family life. It is suggested that this makes changes possible in other areas.

This resurgence of interest in the paternal role is not seen as a revolutionary change for society by its advocates. It can be understood as part of the liberal tradition of social analysis, because it does not involve a radical reassessment of the family or view the family in a wider economic and political context. However, a father's increased concern with his children is seen as an initial step towards altering the balance of involvement with childcare between the sexes. Richards, Lewis, McKee and O'Brian and other writers from the 'Fatherhood' research group would argue that these changes in fatherhood are initial, positive steps towards the creation of a society where both parents are fully involved with the care and upbringing of their children.

While not denying that parental roles may be changing, I aim to look closely in this study at the nature of these changes in a middle class community because the middle class have traditionally considered themselves as the vanguard in matters of good childrearing practice. It is in the middle class that fatherhood appears to be the most changed. I shall argue that the liberal interpretation of these changes cannot be maintained when the wider social context of gender relations is considered. Nor could this be maintained within the middle class family itself on a close reading of my research material. I shall suggest some other interpretations which are not founded on such optimism about the nature of the changes.

Fathers and Divorce

Recently there has been a growing movement to re-assert the rights of men within the family through changes in the law.

During the past 25 years changes in the divorce laws replaced the concept of 'matrimonial fault' with the idea of 'irretrievable breakdown of the marriage'. The sacramental character of marriage gave way to the view of marriage as a shared civil undertaking or partnership. Julia Brophy points out that none of the changes represented an abandonment of the idea that the wife is primarily a housekeeper and childrearer, but offered her greater rewards for acting in these capacities. However, it remains the case that women usually lose their economic independence when they become mothers (5). Marriage embodies a structural relationship in which women's economic dependency continues to be a fundamental feature (Brophy 1982).

Despite considerable evidence to the contrary, changes in the law have been based on the argument that women can now work as men's equals. Until recently women had virtually automatic custody of children when marriage ended. It was argued that women had disproportionate rights in the home.

Robert Rhodes James expressed this viewpoint in a debate in the Commons:

"In my view, the law has now swung so far that the balance of advantage has tipped in favour of wives and against husbands in divorce cases" (1977) (4).

The 'Campaign for Justice in Divorce' has successfully promoted the idea that women now receive 'positive discrimination' at a time when the law in other areas insists that women and men should be treated equally. The argument for equal rights is now used against women, and against wives and mothers irrespective of the fact that family members occupy different positions within the family and the waged economy. Thus the campaign asserts that wives, even common law wives, can financially exploit men and remain a drain on their economic resources for life. Part of the policy statement for 'Campaign for Justice in Divorce' states:

"... Present wives should be regarded as true spouses. The happiness and security of second marriages should not be threatened by the aftermath of the first, except as is absolutely unavoidable because of the obligations to the children of the first marriage" (Campaign for Justice in Divorce, Official Statement of Policy).

Some of the demands of 'Justice in Divorce' were incorporated into 'The Matrimonial and Family Proceedings Bill'. Leo Abse, the bill's sponsor, was quoted in 'Woman's Own' as suggesting that the changes in the law will have at least two good effects. After divorce, women can strive for independence, and men can make a success of their second marriage.

"It will make sure she stands on her own two feet and that if he remarries, his second marriage will have a chance. No man can afford to have two wives and two families" (1983) (6).

The phrase 'stand on her own feet' denies the continuing struggle of employed mothers who are single parents. The disadvantages women suffer in the employment market are compounded once they become mothers. This is highly relevant in divorce settlements.

These issues are kept in the background by another campaign, 'Families Need Fathers', which concentrates on the emotional issues of custody and access. Until very recently mothers had normally gained custody of their children because it was not only acknowledged that it is the mother who does the bulk of the childcare, but believed that this was natural and desirable. This was in line with the maternal deprivation thesis of John Bowlby (1953).

The rhetoric of motherhood which placed women as indispensable and pivotal to child development and imprisoned her in the home at least ensured that on divorce their children, who for most women represented their major investment of time and effort, were not lost to them. However, the language of the eighties no longer extols motherhood. (I shall discuss

this in greater detail later.) Instead equal parenting is suggested both as an ideal and as normal practice. Whereas experts used to emphasise 'maternal deprivation' they now insist on the benefits of mutual parenthood. The campaign 'Families Need Fathers' has been able to draw on this extensive body of literature most of which claims to represent 'the best interests of the child' (7). The term has come to imply a home with the mother after divorce, but a continuing relationship with the father. The campaign refers to the considerable recent research which discusses parent/child relationships after divorce such as Wallerstein and Kelly (1980) who argue that children benefit from maintaining a contact with both parents, and this is echoed by Mary Lund's 'Cambridge Study' (1981).

Interestingly the 'Families Need Fathers' campaign relates only to custody and access after divorce. As Julia Brophy points out the claim that 'Families Need Fathers' would be stronger if they were also demanding 'recognition of the paternal role by employers and trade unions' (Brophy 1982). This would mean campaigning for a nursery in every workplace and a legal recognition for the right of paternity leave for men. Scarlet Friedman and Jo Sutton suggest that there is an increase in paternal legal rights without a commensurate increase in responsibility. "What has resulted is a minimal change in caring and a significant move by men to increase their rights and hence control." (1982, p.125). They express scepticism about the level of paternal involvement which has preceded these legal changes. This is shared by other writers. Ann Oakley as early as 1972 was pointing to the discrepancy between increasing claims of male domesticity and the obvious continuing responsibility of women for housework and childcare, as evidenced by her own studies (Oakley 1972). Her work suggests that if fathers are more involved with their children, it is entertaining them rather than washing the nappies which is taking their

time. This suggestion is reinforced by other studies of family life especially Backett (1982) and Edgell (1980).

Fathers and Babycare Books

However, in the popular childcare manuals, fathers are becoming an increasing presence, and this is effecting as well as reflecting changes in family life. Thus 30 years ago in 1955, Bowlby was able to write about "the absolute need of infants and toddlers for the continuous care of their mother..." (1953, p.18), though he conceded that a mother substitute was better than nothing:

"... all are agreed that substitute care, even if not wholly adequate is indispensable and should always be given." (8)

The assumptions which underlay his thinking continued to inform the work of childcare experts until very recently. Writing in the 1950s and 1960s Winnicott, a paediatrician and psychoanalyst; followed Bowlby's lead. While assuring women they were, after all, the experts on mothering, he wrote, "If a child can play with a doll you can be an ordinary devoted mother" (1964, p.16). This very reassuring approach comes quickly to the point. This is a one-woman job as Winnicott explains, 'the care of a newborn infant is a whole time job, and it can be done well by only one person.' The explicit understanding is that this 'person' is the mother.

"In these pages I want to give mothers information, so that they will know more than they did about what is going on in the baby, and so that they will see how the baby needs just exactly what a mother does well if she is easy, natural and lost in the job" (Winnicott, 1964, p.27).

During the 1960s and 1970s the position of the childcare experts was consolidated and books about babies became very popular and widely used. Many of the authors were also paediatricians. Hugh Jolly (1977), Gordon Bourne (1973) and even Benjamin Spock held traditional views about motherhood and parent-child relationships. However things are now changing. The mother is no longer indispensable. There is a new vision of shared parenthood. Even in 1977 the Good Housekeeping Baby Book was reflecting the new emphasis on mutuality, suggesting that men are increasingly involved with their children, some taking an equal share of the work.

"Over the last few years there has been a great change in men's attitudes to their families. Instead of seeing childrearing as primarily "women's work", very many fathers are becoming just as involved in the upbringing and day-to-day care of their children as they possibly can. In some cases - and they are increasing - their share is genuinely equal" (Shapiro 1977, p.143).

When promoting this suggestion of equality over childcare the Good Housekeeping Baby Book reflects some of the shifting emphasis found in the wider tradition of academic work. The next chapter will search for evidence of this change and question the image promoted by Good Housekeeping.

The Changing Role of Fathers

In 1977 the Rapoport's wrote Fathers, Mothers and Others using the word 'parenting', admitting however that the father's role was not one of equality of responsibility, but putting him first in the title. Their conclusions on dual career families implied a continually improving situation, with fathers becoming increasingly involved with their children,

which close reading of the case histories in the book does not really support. The women in their study continued to take primary responsibility for the children and juggle this with a career, while the men enjoyed their relationships with their children but concentrated more single-mindedly on their career. The Rapoport's focussed on the middle class as the vanguard of change and suggested that values 'trickle down' to the lower classes. This is reminiscent of the Symmetrical Family (1973) in which Young and Willmott argued that the middle class are leading the way into a more egalitarian future through the development of the companionable and mutual modern marriage.

Approaching the same problem from a rather different angle, Joseph Pleck's research in the United States discussed men's family roles and the potential for change. In his work on Men and Masculinity (1981) he reviewed all the myths current about manhood, building up towards a vision of shared parenthood. In the Wellesly Research Institute where Pleck is a director, a considerable output of work on fatherhood continues to suggest changing paternal roles as a reality and as an ideal.

In England the early eighties saw the establishment of the Fatherhood Research Group led by Martin Richards, Head of the Childcare and Development Unit at the University of Cambridge. Richards was disparaging about most recent research on fatherhood, saying that 'a body of work on mothers has been extended to include fathers without any very significant adjustments' (1982, p.59). He suggested that this was not an adequate way of considering fatherhood and he argued that fatherhood must be considered in its real social context.

Richards was cited in The Observer colour supplement as one of the 'New Men' - the men who write about baby care and the changing role of the

father. According to The Observer 'instead of parenthood as panic he preaches intelligent interest and imaginative flexibility' (1984, p.27).

One of the other 'New Men' featured in The Observer was Tony Bradman, Deputy Editor of Parents magazine. He has produced a book on parenthood called So You Want to Have a Baby? (1985). Tony Bradman is especially interesting because he not only writes about the new fatherhood but claims that he lives it himself. However the description of his life in The Observer did not seem promising.

"Sally, who originally earned more than Tony did, had no chance to get a foothold in any sort of career, and now she is fielding six-year-old Emma, four-year-old Helen and year-old Thomas while Tony works ferociously hard to write books at the same time as holding down a full-time job as Deputy Editor of Parents magazine." (The Observer Colour Supplement, 1984, p.27).

The new father still seems to need the wife at home while he has a full-time, promising career. This seems to be a contradiction as in his book he "calls for radical rethinking about work careers and men's emotional involvement with their children" (Bradman, The Essential Father, 1985).

So what are the tasks a new father might undertake? How does this 're-thinking' manifest in his life?

"He makes a point of taking Emma to school in the mornings... They put the children to bed together and then late at night, Tony turns to writing. At weekends he can do more and shares the domestic chores though he likes to fit in some writing then too." (The Observer 1984)

He is the obsessive worker, he is the provider and he is speaking and writing the language of mutuality and parenthood. Tony Bradman provides an ironic example of the new fatherhood. He does not see any contradiction in monopolising paid employment, while his wife remains at home, and at the same time he is increasingly moving into the domestic sphere developing emotional relationships with his children and becoming an expert on

parenting. It is this model of fatherhood which is increasingly promoted as an ideal. And the question is then: what is left for his wife?

McKee and O'Brian in The Father Figure (1982) generally welcome the changes which they discern towards greater involvement of fathers in childcare. In the introduction they explain that 'from the mid-sixties through to the early eighties the face of family research has witnessed a gentle revolution' (1982, p.3). This revolution has meant mother-focussed research is inappropriate and out-moded. Fatherhood has become 'a distinctive and prestigious substantive issue'.

They suggest that family research is moving on. It is paying attention to men. The overwhelming vision of motherhood which previous expertise helped to create has had some unfortunate results for men. The father's ideological exclusion from parenthood has become a problem because women have felt justified in monopolising the children. The pendulum is now swinging in the other direction. The reasons for this McKee and O'Brian understand largely as a result of women's increasing liberation.

McKee and O'Brian point to a number of societal changes which have challenged traditional male and female roles 'and necessarily affect the character of modern family life. These societal changes include the impact of the women's movement, improved job opportunities for women and an increase in single parent families "especially male headed families". They also point to "the spread of unemployment particularly male unemployment."

According to McKee and O'Brian all these factors are part of changes in the family and have encouraged the development of research interest in fathers.

"It is possible to speculate that the increased preoccupation with fathers might be an expression of the move towards women's equality, with men being expected to share childcare. Alternatively it could

represent a backlash against women, when men facing competition from women at work, are attempting compete with women in the home and to appropriate an area in which women were previously autonomous." (My emphasis) (op cit, p.5).

The liberal tradition within which most 'fatherhood' research is located would undoubtedly suggest that this increased preoccupation with fathers is a move towards greater equality. Liberal feminism does not offer a radical critique of the family. It takes the basic structure of the nuclear family for granted and assumes that negotiations about childcare can be carried out within it. The fundamental inequalities between women and men are somehow considered amenable to goodwill and negotiation.

A less optimistic view is also suggested by McKee and O'Brian. Fatherhood research could represent a backlash against women because women are increasingly competing with men in employment. This they suggest leads to a situation with potential for change.

"As men's and women's external social roles become more parallel, diffuse and volatile the possibility of variation, fluidity and interchangeability within the home becomes more real" (op cit, p.5).

Unfortunately, as I shall discuss in greater detail in the next section, there is little evidence of 'men's and women's external social roles becoming more parallel'. Women's increased employment has virtually all been in part-time work (9). As I have already suggested women, are still largely unable to secure access to work or to promotion which would enable them to adequately support homes and children. This has consequences for possible 'fluidity and interchangeability within the home'. In fact the situation may be deteriorating. Since 1968 the percentage of women heads in secondary schools has fallen from 25% to 14%

(10,11). Representation for women in the professions continues to be minimal (12,13).

McKee and O'Brian draw attention to a backlash against women but I would suggest this backlash does not relate to women's increasing employment, but to the changing patterns of divorce. In 1961 there were approximately 27,000 divorces granted in the United Kingdom. In 1986 this number had risen to 168,000 (Social Trends 1988). The number of divorces every year is currently one third of the number of marriages. There is also an increasing number of couples co-habiting who have children. Social Trends reports.

"... there has been an increase in the proportion of illegitimate births registered by both parents from 38% of illegitimate births in 1961 to 66% in 1986... these figures suggest that at least half the children born outside marriage in 1986 had parents who were living together and were likely to be bringing the child up within a stable non-marital union" (Social Trends 1988, p.47).

Presumably these non-marital unions are as likely to break up as marriage itself without any of the legal fuss.

Because of the high divorce rates fathers are increasingly likely to lose contact with their children. Campaigns like 'Justice in Divorce' and 'Families Need Fathers' are concerned about fathers' rights. Proving fathers to be essential to the 'psychological' well-being of children undermines the one area of women's power where they had a measure of compensation for all the other discrimination suffered. Mothers had been the essential parent. Lee Comer suggested a more insidious change in the balance of husband-wife relationships.

"He may leave his own ground to share some of hers but he is not freeing her so that she can occupy the space he has left" (Comer, 1974).

Comer suggests that men are keeping control at work, and there is certainly very little evidence that women are moving in any numbers into management in any area of the economy.

Furthermore, the evidence from Time Budget Studies which I shall discuss in detail later, reveal that women in paid employment with husbands also in employment seem to be doubly burdened. The responsibility for housework and childcare rarely shifts, although some re-allocation of tasks may take place. Men take some share of childcare in the evenings, but the Time Budget Studies show women combining childcare with paid work by cutting down on sleep and leisure time (Szalai 1966). Very few fathers seem to be taking an equal share in childcare or housework. McKee and O'Brian do not suggest equality but they speculate on the 'increased preoccupation' of fathers with their children.

Part of the explanation for men moving into the home may well relate to these changes. In the past men could rely on a continuing relationship but many men are threatened with the possible loss of their children. This may have led to an increase in domesticity but in a selective way.

This Study

This introduction has sketched some of the context and background to a study of parental relations within middle class families. I became increasingly aware of the gap between the rhetoric of equality and the limitations of its application when I was a wife and mother in a middle class family. As every child has two parents, why is it still the mother who stays at home in the early years? For me the issue was personal. Living in a middle class community I could see any number of mothers living the same life as myself. The problem for me was that I did not want to

stay at home. But how did those other mothers feel? Was family life an expression of an equal but different lifestyle for women and men? Because I really wanted to know the answer, I embarked upon a study of my own community. First I wanted to see if parenthood was changing towards some egalitarian ideal. I wanted to know what aspects of parenthood men are involved in, how women support men to be fathers, and why. Conversely I wanted to know how men support women to be mothers. I had, therefore, a concern with the dynamics of everyday life and how it is organised. Furthermore, I wanted to know how women and men explained and justified their lives. What did the language of equality mean? Who speaks it and why? This concern with language became a second focus of the study.

Notes

1. Social Trends, 1988, HMSO.
2. See The Guardian, 6 May 1988, p.1 for a report of J. Hayward v Cammell Laird.
3. In the British Journal of Sociology (the journal of the British Sociological Association) between 1950 and 1969 there were five articles on Weber, seven on Durkheim, 24 on social class and seven specifically on the family out of hundreds of articles published. After 1970 the popularity with BSA members increased slightly and up to 1979 there had already been five articles on the family in the BJS.
4. Rhodes James, Hansard, 27 March 1977, para 1864.
5. 'Mothers whose youngest dependent child is under five are the least likely to be working. Seventy-five percent of married mothers and 82% of lone mothers with children under five in 1981-83 were not working.' Social Trends, 1985, HMSO.
6. Leo Abse, Woman's Own, 10 December 1983, p.25.
7. 'Families Need Fathers' also use articles by experts such as Robin Benians... 'Suicide is far more common in adolescents and adults who lost an important parent figure early in life'. Robin Benians, Families Need Fathers Newsletter, Spring 1981, p.10.
8. Bowlby has been steadily criticised since the mid-sixties. Some of the most effective criticism came from Rutter and Schaffer who summarise studies which evaluate variations in parenting. They find that where there is continuity among a small reliable group of adults there is no evidence that children suffer. On the contrary this may be closer to the historical and cross cultural norm for childrearing.
9. V. Beechey, Marxism Today, August 1985.
10. Times Educational Supplement, 26 July 1985.
11. Male heads of secondary schools - 4,433, women heads of secondary schools - 1,312 in 1968. Statistics of Education, 1968, Vol.4.
Male heads of secondary schools - 3,092, women heads of secondary schools - 478 in 1985. Statistics of Education. Teachers in service in England and Wales, 1985.
12. In 1979 of 3,655 professors in England and Wales 106 were women. Statistics of Education, 1979, Universities, Vol.6.
13. Of 79 high court judges 3 are women. Of 393 circuit judges 16 are women. New Society, 12 June 1987, p.40.

CHAPTER 1

PERSPECTIVES ON THE FAMILY

Introduction

In the introduction to this work I suggested that there was a gap between the language of equality which has become an increasingly popular concept in some areas of society, and the reality of the lives of many women as wives and mothers. The next three chapters will consider this theme from a number of perspectives. This chapter is descriptive - it concentrates on the questions 'where are we now?' and 'how did we get here?' I began to ask some of these questions in the introduction. I shall reflect in greater depth on some of these issues.

I shall consider empirical research to show how the family and parenthood have changed over time and to consider to what extent differences remain in the lives of men and women, especially as fathers and mothers. To this end, historical work and recent research will be used to discuss what changes have taken place and what limits are currently set on the achievement of equality between the sexes.

Following this, Chapter Two will investigate theoretical perspectives on the family, parenthood and sexual inequality from some influential traditions and from current research and writing. The aim will be to consider how these theories and ideas reflect upon the psychological, social and economic differences between men and women and how these differences are perpetuated. A major question will be to consider how and why individuals consent to and perpetuate the disadvantages and restrictions which exist in their own lives.

The research and theory introduced in the second chapter are considered therefore both for the potential insights they offer into relations between the sexes and also for their possible use as a theoretical basis for analysing the data in this research. However all the material considered in Chapter Two failed ultimately to be adaptable enough to address the questions which I really wanted to consider, given the kind of material which I was collecting in the field. Although my intellectual journey through Marx, Freud and many others took a number of years, in the end I decided that my theoretical commitment lay elsewhere.

Chapter Three describes the methodological and theoretical work which ultimately formed the basis for the analysis of material giving details of the theory and writing which was most influential in the final decisions about the theoretical basis of this work. In Chapter 4 I shall move on to the research data itself.

This present chapter is going to examine some of the key aspects of the background to the research. First I shall consider the word 'equality' and look at the ways women have been included in that concept. Second I shall consider the history of motherhood and fatherhood to look at evidence of how these relations have changed over time. Finally I shall review current research studies to gather some indication of changing roles and greater equality between wife and husband today. The introduction gave an overview of some of this research. I shall investigate this material more closely.

First I want to consider the word 'equality' and how women have been included in or excluded from it. 'Equality' has long been a topic for discussion by liberal philosophers. From Locke to Rousseau to Tawney, 'equality' has been debated mainly in relation to the class structure of

society. Only relatively recently has 'equality' become an issue in which women have been considered at all. They became part of the agenda in the 19th century in the work of such writers as J.S. Mill and Mary Wollstonecraft. The feminist struggles over women's suffrage and legal rights brought the issue of equality of women into prominence. (All these, of course, pre-date Tawney and many more recent writers who have continued to focus on class.)

The concern with freedom and equality began to be taken seriously after Locke in 1700. Being born free and equal was a rational starting point, though Locke moves from this point to defend various inequalities between men, and justified the authority of some men over others. However for Locke and his contemporaries equality between men and women was not even part of a philosophical agenda.

For centuries, male theologians, authors and poets eulogised women's weakness and inferiority (1). The dominant understanding of the origins and perpetuation of sexual inequality was explained in terms of the biological differences between the sexes, and these explanations reached their height in the nineteenth-century doctrine of spheres.

For example, in 1884 John Burgeon, an Oxford divinity professor, preached about the 'essential weakness' of women.

"Women's strength lies in her essential weakness... Removed from the stifling atmosphere in which perforce the battle of life has to be fought out between the rougher sex - she is, what she was intended to be - the one great solace of man's life, his chiefest earthly joy." (Burgeon quotation in Burstyn, 1980, p.33).

From this view it is clear that no dialogue about real equality can begin to take place. Women were considered constitutionally weaker than

men and needed to be protected from the harsh world of work. Also God intended woman to be man's 'great solace' and not his equal.

Of course, working class women and men spent most of their day earning money for the family's subsistence (Lewis 1982). Among the middle classes however, life could approximate to an ideal of family life with women at home as moral guardians and home-makers (2). This kind of image remains a powerful force today. The underlying vision of women as naturally weaker than men has been a stumbling block in political discussions about equality from 1700 until today.

In their work on 'Women and the Origins of Liberalism' (1978), Teresa Brennan and Carole Pateman discuss how women have constituted a permanent problem for political theorists, especially the liberal theorists following Locke who argue that individuals were born free and equal. The problem arises because of the husband's authority over his wife. Freedom and equality apply between males, but not between men and women. They suggest that the problem remains unresolved.

"In a formal sense the battle is more or less over. In the last quarter of the 20th century, the principle of individual freedom, which the social contract theorists used to attack patriarchalism is now being institutionalised in the liberal democracies - for both males and females. This could be seen as the last stage of the bourgeois revolution; yet far from fulfilling the promise of liberalism, this formal recognition of women as individual human persons has served to highlight the contradiction between women seen formally as free and equal individuals and women as wives and mothers within the family" (Brennan and Pateman 1978, p.198).

This contrast between women as 'free and equal' and the reality of women as dependants of males as wives and mothers, and as the lowest paid workers (Scott 1982) remains a problem for the new language of equality, as it has since the time of Locke and before.

This chapter will begin an investigation into equality between women and men, especially within the family, from other research and literature.

My own study of a small middle class community will then reflect upon some of the issues raised in this chapter.

PART I

The History and Context of Family Life

The first part of this chapter concentrates on empirical material to give an historical and political context to a discussion of family life and parental roles today. This is essential for setting the scene for my own analysis of the research material where I shall be considering issues about equality and whether parental roles are becoming increasingly interchangeable.

First I shall develop some historical perspectives on the family and parenthood. The family has been widely promoted in recent political pronouncements (implicitly, for example, in the Education Reform Act of 1988) as if it exists as a natural order without a history. However family life and parental roles have changed over time. In this section I shall review some historical material on motherhood and fatherhood which highlights some of the changes. This is especially relevant to my study because motherhood and fatherhood seemed to the people who are part of this research to imply certain inevitable, immutable standards and practices. A commonsense view prevailed on the estate that I studied which suggested that motherhood and fatherhood had always been organised in the way it was on the estate, and always would be.

At the same time as motherhood is understood as an unchanging institution, it is suggested by the people in my study, and more generally from the literature (see Introduction) that fatherhood has changed and will change even more. I felt puzzled that these changes did not seem to affect

the way motherhood was experienced and organised. I turned therefore to historical analysis to see to what extent motherhood and fatherhood have been changing institutions. This is not intended to be an exhaustive survey of the history of the family. I am drawing on historical evidence simply to show that the present arrangements concerning family life have not always held. I have avoided the protracted debates about the family in history (Stone, 1977, Shorter 1976 etc) and concentrated on parenthood itself.

There has been considerable research on the family in history, but it has often treated members as one unit, assuming that their interests were all the same (3). Recently women historians have uncovered evidence to generate new perspectives on women in history, including motherhood. This work shows, not unexpectedly, that motherhood was very different for women of different classes.

Motherhood will be a central part of the following research. Implicitly and explicitly, women suggest the inevitability of their presence in the home while their children are young. However women have not always considered it their sole responsibility to stay at home with their young children. Unravelling the history of motherhood, even to a small extent, places current views in a wider perspective.

One of the earliest feminist historians, Alice Clark, writing at the turn of the century, felt motherhood to be a noble undertaking and often described the family as a generally supportive unit (4). This did not blind her to the problems of the patriarchal organisation of family life, but her main concern was to document the lives of women in the 17th century to show how they were essential to production (5). She then details how capitalism robbed women of much of the status and influence they had, and

diminished their capacities for their own economic support by concentrating on individuals rather than households as units of production. Criticisms of the work of Alice Clark label her as a woman of her time (6). She accepted the primary responsibility of women for childcare, as natural and appropriate. So she did not make problematic the ideal of motherhood which she studied. However the recent work of feminist historians has been to undertake this task.

This is central to the recent work of Elizabeth Badinter. She looks at the history of 'maternal instincts'. In her study of the last three centuries of motherhood in France she questioned the most fundamental tenets of the ideology of motherhood - that there are innate maternal instincts which make women enjoy taking care of children. She argues that these 'instincts' are socially conditioned, and extremely variable. In the 17th century, urban women who could afford to do so sent their babies off to wet nurses for the first years of their lives. Badinter gives evidence to show that many of these babies died from neglect, but the mothers were often unaware of the suffering of their children and were freed to lead fulfilling lives unburdened by the care of small children. Badinter discusses the effect of the work of Rousseau on the mother's role (7). He proposed that the mother herself should take total responsibility for childcare and his work influenced mothering styles considerably. Badinter insists that the care of children is no more a woman's job than a man's. Responsibility should belong to both parents (Badinter 1982).

By Victorian times the sentimental vision of motherhood was well entrenched in the culture if not in the lives of many women. Interesting insights into Victorian and Edwardian parenthood have emerged from the work of oral historians. Thea Thompson's work 'Edwardian Childhoods' (1981) shows how the sentimental vision of family life was largely irrelevant to

both the upper and working classes. The upper classes have always employed nannies and dispatched their sons to boarding school as soon as they were old enough. By 1900 daughters of upper class families were also sent away to school and teaching by governesses almost disappeared (8). Only the middle class, in the last century, really espoused family life in the intense form we know it today. Upper class women clung to their social life and their independence (9).

Working class women could not afford the sentimental model of motherhood. Historians Anna Davin (1979) and Jane Lewis (1980) have both written extensively on the conditions of women's lives at the turn of the century. Jane Lewis explains how bad health among working women was common in the Edwardian period. Reviewing surveys of the period she finds "a disproportionate number of women suffering from anaemia and debility due to poor diet, frequent childbearing and hard housework" (Lewis 1980, p.46). For these women motherhood included being an economic provider. It was therefore impossible for motherhood to be the totally consuming and self-denying occupation embodied in the ideal vision.

At the turn of the century, Lewis and Davin suggest, that motherhood became a major political issue. The First World War was looming. Recruits were found to be unhealthy and undersized. The ideas of eugenics were popular with its strong emphasis on the family and the improving of racial stock. Here the mother was the vital link: "both her health and her role were essential" (Davin 1979). Anna Davin in her work on imperialism and motherhood at the end of the 19th century documents the relationship between motherhood, eugenics and demography. Fears about falling population fed into anxieties about the future of the race and the possibility of being overwhelmed by other races. The mother was the key to

these problems and Anna Davin shows how campaigns and propaganda were aimed at raising standards. The working mother of the turn of the century was especially castigated by liberal reformers. Jane Lewis explains that working class mothers were often considered careless and neglectful because they fed their babies by bottle, left them with minders and went out to work - driven of course by sheer economic necessity. The issue of women's employment was one which concerned most feminists in the early 20th century. How was motherhood to relate to paid employment? (9).

After the First World War this issue was increasingly resolved as women were encouraged to stop work on marriage. Some jobs were not open to married women. According to Jane Lewis this preoccupation of women with domesticity enhanced the position of their husbands. "Men gained self respect... when wives were full-time housewives" (Lewis 1980, p.224).

As health and housing improved and the way was prepared for the intense, home-based family life, women were encouraged to find fulfilment in the efficient and loving care of husband, children and home. The history of motherhood up to the end of the First World War involved both the development of the sentiment which seems such an essential aspect of motherhood and a retreat from employment.

Although women were increasingly isolated with their children their skills as mothers were increasingly undermined by the rise of childcare experts. Ehrenreich and English (1979) discuss the role of the expert in moulding family life and motherhood in the 20th century. They suggest that many women were initially grateful for this advice, apparently feeling that scientific childrearing would produce healthier, happier children. The appeal to science from such disciplines as psychology and medicine itself embodied the idea that knowledge lay in research studies which could reveal how children should be brought up. Although not presenting a sympathetic

view of women, Donzelot (1979) has discussed how 'experts' continue to tyrannise over ever increasing areas of our lives especially within the family. This will be discussed in greater detail later.

The history of motherhood is not separate from changing attitudes towards women, and is closely related to ideas about women's paid employment. Fatherhood may have changed over the centuries, although historical evidence for this is relatively sparse. However men's relationship to employment has not been subject to the same kind of disputes as the relationship between women and paid work.

It is not possible to point to a body of work which treats fatherhood and the experiences of fathers in such a detailed way. The feminist historians have succeeded in revealing women's lives in recent history in great depth. Patriarchy may be the organising principle of the history of the family but fathers themselves in history are largely inaccessible. However, because fatherhood is an important aspect of the research I have tried to outline some of the recent debates about the changes through recent history.

Fatherhood

In written history the organisation of family life around the authority of the father has been demanded and reinforced by a religious and legal system which insisted on the exercise of that authority. Our awareness of family life and parental relationships must be understood through a legal system which upheld the father's rights in the family as paramount up to the end of the last century (Stone 1977) (11).

Certainly fatherhood in the past has been portrayed as potentially brutal and authoritarian and this is a reflection of the strength of a patriarchal system which was rooted in the authority of the Bible.

However the strength of patriarchal authority has varied. Stone describes the period between 1550 and 1700 as 'the reinforcement of patriarchy'. This was a period when the rise of puritanism encouraged the sanctification of marriage and the subordination of wives. The internalised expectations and values of this period appear to conspire, in Stone's view, to promote an authoritarian family with the father in complete control over family members.

However, extreme patriarchal attitudes began to be challenged by 1700. Locke's 'Two Treatises of Government' suggested that the relationship between King and country was analogous to that of father and family. Discussing social relationships he suggested that marriage was a contractual alliance, and the connection between father and children should be based on a limited and temporary authority created by the father's duty to nourish the children until they reach adulthood.

In 1705 Bishop Fleetwood set out the new doctrine which in effect undermined the absolute authority of the father and husband.

"There is no relation in the world, either natural or civil and agreed upon, but there is a reciprocal duty obliging each party" (quoted in Stone, op cit).

Patriarchal authority in its extreme form was therefore waning and the idea of affection as the base of all relationships was becoming familiar. By the 17th century attitudes towards childhood were changing as evidenced in portrait painting. Ariès points out how wealthy parents wanted portraits of their children. According to Ariès parent-child relationships were characterised by

"An obsessive love which was to dominate society from the 18th century on" (Ariès 1967).

It is therefore not surprising that letters from the 18th century should reflect this increasing intensification of family relationships. General Martange's letters to his wife between 1760 and 1780 include many references to his children.

"Scold Mlle Minette (his daughter) for me for so far neglecting to write to me... I look forward to being with you again in our poor little home" (Quoted in Ariès 1967, p.387).

In Britain the child oriented society seemed well established if the life of Boswell at the end of the 18th century is any example. He writes of his involvement with his children. When he went on a journey his daughter Veronica cried very much. When he returned "The children were quite overjoyed to see me again. Effie and Sandie actually cried. This was very fine" (Stone, p.287).

Once again the evidence which exists shows upper and middle class family relationships as intense and emotional. The working classes had less time for concern with family relationships. John Burnett's research using working-class autobiographies revealed a life that was generally hard for everybody (Burnett 1982) (10). In his studies father-child relationships varied from brutal to kindly. However Trevor Lummis; in his work on East Anglian fishermen, writes, "the role of the father in the recent past is largely unknown and probably misrepresented through poor quality anecdotal evidence" (1982, p.55). He suggests that more detailed historical research is needed to understand some of the patterns in fathers relationships with their children which must vary both across time and from one area to another.

Summary

In this historical work on motherhood and fatherhood certain themes emerge which are relevant to this research. One is the increasing emphasis in the early part of this century on the mother-child bond. This affected the relationship between women and paid work and led to the emergence of domesticity as women's only work.

Motherhood has been a changing institution depending on class and the economic structure of the period as well as individual preference. There never has been one version of motherhood at any time. Most recently however there has been one ideal of motherhood promoted in the media, through the law and underlying the practice of the social agencies who intervene in family life. This ideal derives from the sometimes cloying image of Victorian middle class domesticity. As affluence has increased (relative to the past) this domesticated, home centred vision of motherhood has been seen as universally appropriate. Now, as in Victorian times, the aristocracy employ nannies for babies and despatch children to boarding schools. They have generally not liked claustrophobic motherhood. And, as in the past, the working classes cannot afford it. Fatherhood has always been a more varied institution with fathers able to take on as much or as little domestic work and childcare as they decide, or as their paid employment will allow.

PART II

Family Life in Britain Today

In this section I will consider areas of family life which might give some indication of changing roles and greater equality between wife and husband. The family is a unit which potentially encompasses many aspects of human need. Members may expect emotional support, financial support, childcare, possibly care for the sick and elderly. Everyday family life includes the provision of money, the preparation and consumption of food and the domestic servicing of family members.

If family life is changing, then some of these areas of life might reflect the changes. I shall therefore review some of the research and literature and look at some empirical work which reflects family life since the Second World War, and more specifically during the last 20 years. I shall review research which in some ways reflects the different areas of interest of my own work. I have been concerned with ideas about increasing equality of commitment to childcare. The first section looks at childcare and the way some researchers have understood parenthood today. How has current research seen male and female roles in the family?

Other indicators of increasing equality in the family would certainly concern finance, both the differences in potential earning capacity for men and women, and finance within the family itself in terms of the distribution of family money. In this chapter I shall review some research in these areas and look at figures released by the government about employment and low pay.

Another area which would indicate moves toward the increasing equality between parents in a family would be a changing division of labour. There has been detailed research undertaken in cross cultural time budget

studies. In this section I shall also review some of the legal changes which have contributed to our current vision of male and female roles in the family to see how the law supports certain views of family life. Recent changes in the law have supported a view of equality between the sexes and this has been reflected in changes in the divorce laws. Finally I shall consider some writing about heterosexuality, which is the cornerstone of family life.

The impressions gained from this material will contribute to a picture of parenthood and family life today, and while acknowledging the inevitably partial and piecemeal nature of this research review, it does provide some initial ways of thinking about changes towards equality in family life.

Perspectives on Parenthood

As the negotiation and organisation of motherhood and fatherhood will be central to this research, I shall begin by looking at both to see what views are introduced by recent research studies. I gave an overview in the Introduction showing how research on fatherhood is gaining in prestige and popularity. Motherhood, however is still closely observed by researchers. Many writers point out that the mother's role may be a source of ambivalence and conflict as well as pleasure.

Research on parenthood includes varying perspectives on family life. Busfield and Paddon discussed some of the factors which continue to influence women into the family. Drawing on research material from the late sixties and early seventies they suggest that "those [women] who do not marry and have children tend to be seen as not properly female." (1977). They claim that marriage is still considered "the appropriate condition for having children" and as most people have children so marriage

remains constantly popular. They point out how marriage by itself is not enough to create the family. The family means children. Despite their interest in children they are not concerned with motherhood as an identity but draw a vision of family life which is relatively harmonious and where women's roles are still considered inevitable and unnegotiable.

Ann Oakley's work on motherhood (1985,1986), usually through the perspective of the crucial moment of childbirth, is mainly woman orientated. For her the acquisition of the identity as mother is constantly problematic, and women can become confused about their identity when childcare and paid work pull in opposite directions. Paid work involves some identity out in the world whereas childcare does not. She suggests that for men on becoming fathers "there appears to be no sense of identity confusion to parallel many women's experiences." Much of her work has consisted of discussing and recording women's accounts of their experiences of childbirth and motherhood, and comparing these with medical, sociological or stereotypical explanations of the same events (Oakley 1985). This is a similar undertaking in the work of Mary Boulton On Being a Mother (1983). Boulton disagrees with Busfield and Paddon's rather sweeping statements about children giving meaning to marriage. A quarter of the women in her study felt that children had created problems for the marriage. Many women she interviewed felt ambivalent or did not enjoy motherhood.

In her research, Susannah Ginsberg (1981) points to some of the conflicts faced by mothers which might account for this ambivalence. She suggests that the commitment to total responsibility for children may be what a mother believes is right, but may still create tension and conflict. Amongst the women she interviewed this commitment to 'proper mothering' often led to feelings of low self-esteem because of the repetitive and

draining nature of what is a full-time job when children are young. Most of these writers are pointing to the conflict and tension which living out motherhood actually entails. Wanting children and taking on the identity of parent are very different processes for men and women. The strains of adjusting to total commitment and responsibility can, for women, overwhelm all other sources of identity.

Fathers

What research studies do exist tend to lead to the conclusion that within most families, irrespective of class, fatherhood remains a very different role from motherhood. Men seem to consider parenthood as part of a relationship with the family rather than a major source of their identity. In his research, Lewis was interested in the way men thought about fatherhood before they actually became fathers. Most men in his studies claimed that they had rarely considered the prospect of fatherhood and are therefore unprepared for it. He reports that "fathers claim that if a decision was made to have a child the woman is the motivating force." (Lewis 1982, p.18). The men in Lewis' study also constantly withdraw from the responsibility of children. Part of the rationale for this may be their expressed initial reluctance to become parents. Because women are more single-minded in their desire for children, this allows men to be equivocal and apparently indecisive.

If most men are able to maintain that they do not consider fatherhood until they are confronted with the prospect of pregnancy, it is not surprising that motherhood and fatherhood are very different lifestyles. Fatherhood has never been subjected to the kind of prescriptive treatment which motherhood has received since the turn of the century. The idea of

the father as a provider meant that fatherhood was most often described through the father's absence from home rather than his presence. However, it has become the new orthodoxy that the caring father is concerning himself increasingly with the work of bringing up his children. In my research the changing trends of fatherhood are an important aspect of the analysis. Although most middle class fathers have full-time careers there is, as I have already discussed in the Introduction, a general impression that fathers are taking a greater interest in their children and participating in some of the menial tasks as well as the pleasures of childcare. I want to consider some of these ideas in current literature because they will form a central part of the analysis. For that reason I will now look at writing about fatherhood and careers.

In Fathering Ross Parke sets out to show how the traditional father who was not involved in childcare is being replaced by a new generation of fathers actively involved in the care of their children (Parke 1981). As evidence of the increased paternal role, Graeme Russell documents the lives of 50 Australian men who live in role swap marriages. He discusses how some of these are more apparent than real, but in others a genuine interchange of roles has taken place (Russell 1983). Some research focuses on paternal emotions. In Psychological Aspects of Fatherhood (1982), Beail and McGuire examine the everyday experiences of fathers and in The Father Figure (1982) fatherhood research is gathered together to reveal how fathers feel about fatherhood and explore experiences which are 'paternal'. (O'Brian and McKee 1982)

In Fathers, Childbirth and Work Bell, McKee and Priestley (1983) discuss issues about paternity leave and in the process they discuss fathers' commitment to family life through a range of families, highlighting how the ideal of the concerned and involved father is subject

to flexible interpretation. This flexibility is less possible for mothers because there is a basic minimum of work which must be accomplished. In Mothers and Fathers Kathryn Backett (1982) suggests that paternal involvement in childcare may be in part a fiction which the mother helps to maintain. "Spouses negotiated with each other mutually satisfactory arrangements which enabled them to maintain a belief in the direct involvement of the father." (1982,p.196). However, in reality fathers may not have much direct involvement in childcare. Backett suggests that fatherhood is negotiated through mothers. Her families stressed the father's direct involvement in childcare despite his frequent absence. She shows how mothers encourage fathers into giving the researcher appropriate paternal responses. She tells of her experience during interviews.

"Occasionally during the course of the interview some of the husbands commented, for example, that they only liked being with their children for short periods; that they found their demands oppressive; or that they quickly became bored with them. Typically, their wives countered such statements by emphasising how well father and child got on with each other and by reminding them of pleasurable times spent together." (op cit, p.215).

Backett concludes that equal parenting has not been achieved and suggests that fathers remain 'peripheral' and 'helpers' 'with overall responsibility remaining with the mother' (p.228).

In tacit acknowledgement of this, it is perhaps inevitable that research on the male identity more usually concentrates on men as employees. There is a continuing lack of potential for changes in fatherhood because of the relationship of men to their work (12). Men's identity may be tied up with their work. The work of Evans and Bartolomé (1980) discussed career and the meaning of work. They undertook a study of French managers and their wives. In these interviews Evans and Bartolomé talked to men whose work dominated their lives. In summarising interview

material with young managers. they explain how career is prioritised over family. Even if the marriage is under strain, their young managers do not prioritise family life. Their dilemma, they suggest, is the following: not 'how can I resolve that tension so as to regain a gratifying private life', but 'how can I pursue my career without destroying my family life?' (p.298).

Fortunately managers and their wives both agree that his work is the priority. One of their managers justified continuing to work hard by saying 'If I didn't work as hard, I'd be much less satisfied. I'd be miserable when I'm at home and things would be even worse than now' (Evans and Bartolomé in Derr p.298).

Some of these issues were also the subject of Gaynor Cohen's research on the 'Green Lea Housing Estate' (1977). She was looking at the family life of 42 couples. Many of the husbands were managers. She discussed how husband's career dominated the family. The men were often away from home, involved in a struggle for advancement, and work long hours. Besides, she points out that this 'struggle coincides with the most demanding phase in the family life. The strain which it imposes on the wife is very great'. (p.153). Some wives were able to gain support through friendships on the estate itself, but in many cases the marriage suffered and marital relations were very strained.

Steve Edgell in his study of middle class couples reinforces this idea of middle class marriage as husband dominated, justified by his career. Edgell suggests the men in his study were very attached to their job, 'and it had great personal significance for them' (1978, p.91). This commitment of men to their work influenced every aspect of family life from the timing

of meals to the choice of where to live. However Edgell suggests that wives and husbands both allow the male career to be their priority.

This is also the subject matter of Janet Finch's book 'Married to the Job' (1983). She discussed the incorporation of wives into men's work. She pointed out that not only do male jobs dominate family life but women's contribution through domestic work or often through direct input benefited both husband and employer. She queried the benefits to the wife.

Just from a brief survey of some work on parental roles, it is clear that the lives and expectations of men and women remain very different. It is the nature of almost all male work that no allowance is made for male childcare responsibilities. This is an acknowledgement that men do not take the responsibility either for childcare or for housework. The idea that men are beginning to acknowledge that they have competing priorities in their lives concerning paid work and childcare is not very evident from most of this research.

Nevertheless, the study for the Equal Opportunities Commission into paternity leave drew an optimistic picture of involvement of working class men in family life in many cases. However commitment to work and career structures may make this more problematic in the middle classes (Bell et al 1983).

Power and Decision Making

I shall now go on to consider power within the family, finance, the law and sexuality because these are all areas where inequalities between the sexes might be revealed. Later in this study all of these categories will be used to analyse my own research material.

Some sociologists have concentrated on the relationship itself and therefore often felt able to point to equality of power by considering the decision making process within marriage. This is the essence of the work by Blood and Wolfe (1960). They suggest that power is reflected in who makes the final decision on important areas of family life. They suggest eight areas ranging from those traditionally held entirely by the husband to those held entirely by the wife. These areas include such issues as what job the husband should take, what car to get, what house to buy. At the other end of the scale there are decisions about how much money the family should spend each week on food. These issues were chosen because they are faced by all couples and affect the family as a whole. They suggest that power between husbands and wives can be understood as part of their interpersonal relationship and that each partner brings certain qualities to the relationship:

"The balance of power is after all an interpersonal affair and the wife's own characteristics cannot be long disregarded if we are to understand who makes the decisions. Whenever possible it is desirable to compare the wife and the husband on the same characteristics, for then the comparative resourcefulness and competence of the two partners can be discovered. Once we know which partner has more education, more organizational experience, a higher status background, etc. we will know who tends to make most of the decisions." (1960, p.37).

This assumption of the potential equality between husbands and wives has been criticised by a number of authors. Constantia Safilios-Rothschild wrote a series of telling criticisms of their work pointing out that all decisions are given equal weight in their scale, although obviously some decisions affect family life more deeply than others. She also argued for a more complicated system of measurement, which revealed the multi-dimensional nature of decision making. Both spouses might contribute something to a final decision (1969).

Dair Gillespie in her work points out that the Blood and Wolfe scales cannot indicate the nature of marital power because the husband has structural sources of power which are not allowed for in these scales of measurement. She suggests that middle class men are privileged within the family because of their careers. They can "accept the doctrine of equality without having to live it". She argues that "in competition with his wife, the man has most of the advantages (1972, p.127). Gillespie concludes that for the wife to gain any power in the marital relationship, it must come from external sources, a job, a good education, participation in organisations. "Equality of resources such as education, or income leaves the power in the hands of the husband."

Gillespie argues that it is important to take the wider context of economic and social life into consideration when discussing issues about power in the family because looking within the family fails to: "expose certain kinds of power which automatically accrue to the husband" (p.124). She suggests that these include the socialisation that women undergo which encourages them to think of themselves as domestic resources; the fact that marriage is a contract which obliges women to provide these kinds of services; the economic sources of power which are more available to men than to women; and many other factors including the life cycle of women who are mothers and take time out of careers and work for child rearing. All of these add up to greater power in the world for men.

This point is also made by Steve Edgell in his study of decision making and family life (1978). "To a large extent the power to control one's own life and the lives of others even against their will, accrues 'automatically' to the husband-breadwinner." He discusses the powerlessness associated with the position of women at home especially

those with young children. Meanwhile the husband retains his life in the world and therefore his sources of power.

The Lower Position of Women

As women's power in the home is related to the structural power relations in society it is important to understand the disadvantages which women suffer. The Sixth Annual Report of the Equal Opportunities Commission explained that women's earnings relative to men's had "settled in the range of 73-75%". (1) When overtime was included, Glucklich and Snell reported in 1981 that 54% of women were classified as low paid workers compared to 13% of men. (Glucklich and Snell 1981) (2).

This situation of low pay and non-unionised labour is not found only in Britain. Hilda Scott suggests that it is a world-wide problem. More women throughout the world are on their own with children, as wage labourers are often compelled to live away from home. The men in large areas of Africa, Asia and South America are forced to leave home to earn money. Scott points out that the income gap between men and women is still growing, and women are left in a worse position than men. "Difficult as the situation of the majority of people in the third world is, the position of women is still deteriorating with respect to that of men."

Since the Second World War, women's employment in the UK has risen from seven million in 1951 to 9.2 million in 1981. However, as Veronica Beechey points out, most of this is due to the expansion of part-time work, which in Britain has increased as dramatically as women's employment. Part-time employment is often badly paid and insecure non-unionised labour. As Beechey explains, this may mean fewer full-time jobs for women which

would give "an independent income and security" (1985, p.14) because so many women are forced to take badly-paid unprotected part-time jobs.

This is an issue which is beginning to be taken up by the trade unions. Until recently the idea of the family wage has been influential. Underpinning the family wage lie powerful assumptions about the respective responsibilities of men and women in the home and in the labour market. Hilary Land discusses how it has been assumed that "men's wages should be sufficient to support a family, whereas women's wages are supplementary to others" (1981). Land points out how the idea of a family wage works against the interests of women, making them into the dependants of men, and works against the interests of children who are financially supported by their mothers. The assumption remains that the most appropriate work for women is undemanding and part-time.

I have discussed some of the wider economic issues which make women's relationship to employment more tenuous and difficult than men's. Now I want to look at forces within the family which also exert certain pressures towards female dependency on men. This is the area where external relationships impinge directly on individuals to result in inequalities.

Family Money

The inability to earn equivalent wages to men reinforces women's domestic position in the home. This disadvantage means that men can assume the role of breadwinner as of right. This is certainly part of the complex interaction of forces which operates in society to reduce a woman's economic power and capacity for self determination. It is difficult for women to have an equal share in controlling finance either in the home or in the economy in general, when they have less income to call their own.

Ann Oakley described the finances of the middle class family as being part of an open system. The husband pays the bills and is prepared to discuss "any aspect of money affairs with his wife". (1974, p.144). In this 'open' system he is assisted by the fact that his wife thinks of the money earned from his job as 'his money'. She thinks of herself as his dependant.

This position of inferiority in relation to decisions about money has been discussed recently by a number of writers. Jan Pahl points out that we still have very little information about the flow of money within families, but that this has not prevented policy-makers from holding assumptions about the nature of such flows. These assumptions, she suggests, "will shape the nature of relations within households." (1982, p.4). The consequence of treating married women as the financial dependants of their husbands is often to prolong this dependency. Until recently in our tax system, husbands and wives were considered as one unit with the wife as the dependant of the husband, although this is changing now. This assumption of dependency is even clearer when it comes to social security. In any household which includes an adult male, he is ^etrated as the main breadwinner and it is assumed that he shares his income with the other members of the household. It is also assumed that all members of a family have the same standard of living, and this has the effect of hiding a substantial amount of poverty. Women (and children) often live at a lower standard than the husbands. Jan Pahl describes how many women whose marriages have broken down say that they are 'better off' on Supplementary Benefit (Pahl, 1982).

In her study of the financial arrangements of 50 families in Australia in 1981, Meredith Edwards drew some conclusions related to income level and wife's employment, suggesting that women who earned their own incomes were

more likely to have more say in family spending than unemployed women. She concludes that women's employment erodes some of the husband's control of family matters. However she also points out that most husbands retain a 'joint say' in all financial decisions even if their wives are employed (p.132).

The greater the proportion of the household income which a spouse contributes, the greater part will that partner play in decision making. Clearly women at home with small children are most dependent and most powerless. The wife's power increases relative to the husband when she earns money.

Time and Tasks

The relationship between finances and the power in families partially accounts for the different responsibilities of men and women in the home. There has been a considerable body of work devoted to finding out just what these responsibilities entail. I would like to look in detail at the Time Budget Studies which have been very popular with sociologists in Eastern Europe where, according to Philip Stone, they are used in social planning (1975). The Time Budget centres on a diary which the respondents agree to fill in occasionally during a specified day while events are still fresh in their minds. Ideally the next day the interviewer returns and goes over the record in detail to make sure the report is complete.

Despite the sampling procedure with all its limitations (13), the Time Budget Studies have often revealed some interesting issues. A cross cultural study in 1975, which recorded the allocation of time on one day in the life of 26,000 adult women and men living in urban settings in 11 socialist and capitalist countries, revealed not only differences between

men and women but highlighted different lifestyles of east and west (Stone 1975).

One of the 'findings' was that married women in the west average half an hour less sleep a night than men. The author concludes that the figures "reflect not only a disadvantage for employed women compared to men, but also an appallingly low amount of sleep for women" (Stone in Michelson 1975, p.119).

The breakdown of figures between men and women, and the employed and unemployed wife, are also useful. Women it seems, must work an extra 1 1/2 hours a day more than men, on average, if they have paid work and children (Stone, p.130). This picture of the overburdened employed married mother is echoed through eastern Europe as well as the west.

The early Time Budget Studies were followed up by others with more specific intentions. In 1978 Hill & Stafford's study looked at class and parental care of children. They found that all mothers interviewed reduced their time in the labour market when they had young children, but that working class mothers returned to work sooner than 'high status mothers'.

A study particularly relevant to my work is Sarah Fenstermaker Berk's study of husbands at home (1979). Primarily using diaries, she looked at the ways in which the household activities of husbands are structured through the day. She found that in the morning very little is undertaken by men that is not directly related to the immediate imperative of going to work. However she did find a different pattern in the evening.

"During the later evening hours after dinner, these husbands are still engaging in a variety of tasks which include errands, phone calls, emptying the garbage, and planning family activities. In addition, putting children to bed becomes the last task of the evening." (p.140).

So Sarah Fenstermaker Berk draws a picture of the husbands with children (in her sample) as having an inflexible morning routine, but coming in from work to undertake some childcare tasks or some family maintenance tasks in the evening.

The Oxford study by Ellen Derow (1981) of 26 families is also illuminating. She looked at the total workload of parents studying the amount of time allocated to different activities. She refers to the triple workload of parents - childcare, housework and employment - and looking at the family as a unit she tries to unravel the extent to which sharing takes place. The sample included employed and unemployed wives living in intact families. Diaries and semi-structured interviews were used. Activities were recorded for 15 minute time segments.

She found that employed mothers did not greatly increase their expectations of children. Women reported more work and less free time than the men. The traditional division of labour between men and women was revealed. Women reported more time in housework, and men spent more time out at work. Furthermore, she found the women undertaking three times as much childcare as the men, and the women were responsible for the more work-like aspects of childcare while the fathers took over the more leisure-like aspects. She found, for example, that the mother would take on the housework while the father took the children to the park to play. An early study by Ann Oakley suggested that men are opting out of all but the 'sheerly pleasurable' aspects of childcare. Fathers in her study would play with the children before bedtime, but the hard work of childcare and domestic maintenance was left to the mother (Oakley 1972). If men are expanding their contribution to childcare by enjoying the pleasures of childrearing while mothers continue to undertake the hard work this can hardly be an extension of egalitarian ideals.

There is very little in these studies of the division of labour in all kinds of families to incline a reader towards an optimistic view of the supposed new equality within the family. Fathers may be taking an increased interest in their children, but this does not translate into an increase in domestic work - at least not the most unpleasant jobs. I shall consider this in detail in the research in this study to see if men are doing more domestic work and what it is they are doing. I suggested in the Introduction that the rising divorce rate must affect men's relationships with their children. In the next section I want to consider the ways in which the law buttresses traditional family life.

Marriage, Divorce and the Law

This section is concerned with the changing legal structure relating to marriage and divorce. Differing expectations for men and women especially as parents are reinforced by a legal system which influences marriage and childrearing in fundamental ways. Central to legal concerns about the family has been the concept of 'the best interests of the child'. However, these best interests have shifted considerably over the last hundred years. A historical dimension is essential to understand how the law has reached its present position.

In the 19th century, the rights of fathers and the best interests of the child were increasingly seen to be opposed in a number of important cases. At that time the father's paternal absolute authority remained enshrined in the law. Pinchbeck and Hewitt describe how before 1839, mothers separated from their children by divorce were denied access to them. Some legal cases aroused public indignation. They describe *Rex v Manneville* in 1804 where an eight-month-old child still being breastfed by

its mother was taken from her and given to its father on the breakdown of their marriage. The courts upheld the father's rights to custody because prior to 1839 all parental authority was paternal. (Pinchbeck and Hewitt, p.370).

However the discrepancy between the rising ideological tide of the vocation of motherhood and the old idea of paternal rights gave mothers a more solid basis in custody disputes. Increasingly the idea gained ground that the welfare of the child demanded a home with the mother. In 1839, Talford's Bill proposed that a Judge in Equity might make an order allowing mothers against whom adultery was not proved to have the custody of their children under seven, with right to access to their older children at stated times. Brophy and Smart point out that before 1839 the idea of 'father right' was uncontroversial and the father gained automatic custody of the child. The 1839 bill was the first challenge to that, 'providing the first formal link between a mother and her child' (1981,p.4).

By 1900 the father's authority continued to be largely upheld by the law and the legal gains made by women were tied to moral judgements and sexual chastity. Although the position of women had been slightly improved, it was difficult for a woman to leave her husband and gain custody of her children. She had first to separate from her husband and if she could prove a matrimonial fault the courts could award her custody of her children. Julia Brophy explains that for most women it was impossible to establish a separate residence, so the law simply did not work. (1982, p.151).

At the turn of the century the welfare of the child had become a subject of concern to liberal reformers (Davies 1978), and the 20th century has seen the needs of the child become enshrined as an organising principle of family law. Jane Lewis points out that as the "welfare of the next

generation" was seen to depend on the mother. this "elevated her maternal duties and status" (Lewis 1982).

Consequently mothers gained some legal acknowledgement of their position through what Ehrenreich and English (1978) call 'the reflected glory of the child'. The courts reduced the powers of the father, not so much as a reflection of the improved status of women but as a recognition of the social value of mothering.

In the early 20th century the renewed interest in the health, welfare and education of children meshed with a vision of motherhood which had its roots firmly embedded in the 19th century sentimental view of woman. The attempts to raise the standard of mothering in the early 20th century spotlighted the mother as 'the pivot of the family' (Lewis 1982). These kinds of debates were the backdrop to the 1925 Act which lay down the principles by which disputes between parents over children should be settled. This was presented, not as an extension of the rights of women but as a concern with the rights of children.

Since 1925 'mother love' has been the major influence in determining custody, unless the mother had committed adultery which lost women their children as late as 1975 (14).

The rights of fathers are currently being re-asserted, however, and recent research into children's lives after divorce has increasingly stressed the need for a continuing relationship with both parents. This is held to be in 'the best interests of the child'. The principle of the best interests of the child has been written specifically into the law since 1971. The Guardianship of Minors Act (1971) states that where the custody or upbringing of minors is concerned, the Courts shall regard the welfare of the child as their first and paramount consideration.

It is arguable that the rising divorce rate has influenced the quality of relationships which men have with their children. If men are more concerned with their children, they are also concerned not to lose them. If the best interests of the child mean continued involvement with the father after divorce, then this has implicit assumptions for 'father-child' relations before divorce. The loving and concerned father of the ideal vision of family life establishes his relationship with his children before divorce.

Carol Smart points to a continuity between marriage and divorce (1984). The law still assumes that the mother will undertake the bulk of childcare responsibility. The father's increasing interest in his children is reflected in the changes in the law. In the research material which follows in later chapters, I shall discuss some Denton Estate divorces and consider how divorce sets the context for marriage and childcare in this community.

Sexuality

Heterosexuality underpins the family and as such provides another kind of context for family life. Although I did not specifically deal with issues about sexuality in interviews, it was often part of my conversations with women.

Sexuality encompasses a vast range of issues from the most public to the most private. In this section I shall look briefly at writing about sexuality, heterosexuality and gender.

The definitions of sexuality which influence our cultural ideas today have their roots within earlier historical periods. Reinforcement for heterosexual relations can be traced back through the work of the

sexologists throughout the century. In this context it is impossible to ignore the work of Freud.

Although Freud treated homosexuality as an immature sexual development he always maintained that the establishment of heterosexuality as a sexual identity was tenuous (Freud 1977 edition). As I will discuss in later sections, Freud has been a major influence on thinking about sexuality. The stress in Freudian theory on the initial bisexuality of the child, and the psychic rather than biological nature of gender identity, has attracted many feminists to Freudian analysis. Mitchell (1974) and Rose (1983) argue that they can use Freudian ideas without endorsing the implied inevitability of patriarchal forms of heterosexuality found in Freud's work, but focusing on the tenuous nature of the sexual identity.

The process of the acquisition of a gendered subjectivity for Freud involves the structuring of innate drives which are initially neither masculine nor feminine. The resolution of the Oedipus complex gives the young child a gender identity, but the processes are different for girls and boys and these differences determine the qualities of normal femininity and masculinity. However Freud's description of normal femininity is hardly flattering.

"I cannot evade the notion (though I hesitate to give it expression) that for women the level of what is ethically normal is different from what it is in men... Character traits which critics of every epoch have brought up against women that they show less sense of justice than men, that they are less ready to submit to the great exigencies of life, that they are more often influenced in their judgements by feelings of affection or hostility..." (Freud 1977 edition, p.342).

For Freud, sexuality is the major formative aspect of identity, and there are character traits which relate to the resolution of the Oedipal complex differing accordingly for female and male. As Jung points out, however, there is no reason to prioritise sexual relations above other

kinds of social relations as constitutive of identity. In discussions about sexuality, psychoanalysis is one set of theories among others which has influenced cultural understanding about sexuality (Jung 1937).

At the turn of the century the new science of sexology began to flourish. The teachings of sexology extolled heterosexuality and emphasised women's maternal role. Havelock Ellis suggested that heterosexuality and motherhood were essential to a 'humanly complete life'.

"In order to live a humanly complete life every healthy woman should have, not sexual relationships only, but the exercise at least once in her life of the supreme function of maternity, and the possession of those experiences which only maternity can give." (Ellis 1922, pp.65-6).

Underlying Ellis' work were notions of innate masculinity and femininity, and an aspect of femininity was dependency and a strong need for affection. He remained convinced that single sex schools could create homosexuality. By keeping the sexes isolated from one another, their sexual urges were transferred to the same sex. He therefore advocated co-education.

It was not simply male writers who advocated heterosexuality and married love. Marie Stopes, the influential birth control campaigner, was concerned to promote 'married love'. In the preface to her book Enduring Passion she writes,

"I am convinced that the more happy childbearing and enduringly passionate marriages there are in the state the more firmly established is that state." (Stopes 1953).

Dedicating this book to "all who wish to remain married lovers" she deals with a number of sexual problems and has chapters on 'Undersexed Husbands', 'the Frigid Wife' and 'the Second Honeymoon' among others.

Of course, apart from promoting marriage motherhood and family life, Stopes argued for birth control. Before the last war Dora Russell and Stella Browne also campaigned for birth control as women's right to self determination, but many other women's groups fought contraception on the grounds of eugenics and health (Russell 1981). The campaign for birth control was won, however, and the ideological equation between sex and reproduction was loosened. This had consequences for women's sexuality in particular, which was no longer inevitably tied to motherhood.

After the Second World War, there were marked continuities in sex education manuals concerning sexuality. Sexual intercourse was still seen as legitimate only within marriage. However the increased entry of married women into waged work and the diminishing of women's childrearing years changed the nature of family life. Married couples could contemplate sex without children. Men and women could also contemplate sex without marriage, although the sexual revolution, as it has come to be known, did not really occur until the sixties and seventies. The contraceptive pill in the early sixties made it easier for sex and reproduction to remain separate for the majority of women. Consumerism through fashion and the more blatant sexualisation of women's bodies all contributed to the supposed 'sexual liberation of women'. Beatrix Campbell points to the illusory aspect of this liberated state because sexual permissiveness has a different meaning for men and women.

"The permissive area has some pay-off for women in so far as it opened up sexual space. It permitted space for women too. What it did not do was defend women against the differential effects of permissiveness on men and women... it was primarily a revolt of young men... The affirmation of sexuality was a celebration of masculine sexuality" (Campbell 1982).

Campbell suggests that the double standard remained despite sexual liberation, with men congratulated for sexual exploits while women suffered degrading comments for similar behaviour. Also she points out that liberation was about heterosexual sex rather than lesbianism. However, definitions of sexuality had shifted. Sex had previously been seen as a force which needed to be contained within marriage (at least for men). The new idea was expounded that sexuality was healthy and essentially harmless. The work of Kinsey in the 1950s showed a range of sexual diversity through massive statistical surveys of sexual behaviour. The recordings of sexual response by Masters and Johnson in the 1960s helped to reinforce and reflect changes about sexual behaviour. A whole new sex therapy sprang up which could help to eliminate any negative attitudes towards the goal of mutual enjoyment between sexual partners.

Of recent feminist work about sexuality, very few writers concern themselves with issues about married sex. Two exceptions are Caroline Bird (1979) and Lillian Rubin (1981). In her study of working wives Caroline Bird found that once women returned to work they took greater control of their lives, including sex.

"Until they earned money these wives were having sex when they didn't really want it or just to be agreeable. Only when they went to work did they automatically renegotiate the contract that links sex and money. The logic seems to be that if his money gives him control over the timing of sex... then her money ought to give her more to say about it too." (Bird 1979, pp.83-84).

Another interesting insight into married sex is provided by Lillian Rubin. She talked to older women who maintained that their sex lives improved as their husband's sexual powers waned. They discovered their own sexual rhythms and many began to enjoy their sexual relationship often after years of feeling oppressed by their husband's sexuality.

However the major encounter with sexuality in feminist literature has reflected other concerns, principally pornography (Griffin 1981, Dworkin 1981) and the development of alternative sexuality through lesbian relationships.

This is the real critique of heterosexuality, discussing how the accepted heterosexual normality is not biological but political. Within this Study, heterosexuality was utterly taken for granted at the time of the research, although there were indications that many marriages continued over the years without involving sexual relations.

The AIDS epidemic will undoubtedly change our sexual behaviour eventually but the real extent of the change is not yet apparent.

SUMMARY

In Chapter One I have tried to introduce a number of ideas about current family organisation and parenthood. Firstly I suggest that the family and parental roles have a history of change. There are few essential or intrinsic aspects of motherhood or fatherhood which have not been subject to change over time. In our cultural mythology the family is seen as some God-given natural order which guarantees the sexual division of labour within the family. The evidence from historical research denies this. Parenthood has changed with different economic and cultural conditions.

Coming to the family today, I looked at ways that the family is buttressed through external supports such as the law, social agencies and the way the economic and political structure of society helps to reinforce women in domestic roles and male work in the wider society.

Research evidence collected from within families does not really support the suggestion that there is any move towards greater equality in real terms. Women still appear to undertake the bulk of domestic organisation and work, and middle class men can shelter behind their careers to justify a variable but often minimal commitment in domestic involvement.

The evidence from this section points to two conclusions. Firstly the family has no intrinsic natural form. It is subject to change as are parental roles. Secondly there is evidence of the continuing relations of domination existing between men and women. This may be tempered by dialogues about equality, mutuality and companionship but evidence of substantially greater equality within the family is difficult to find.

The question remains as to why this is the case. Why do women accept inequality? How do male and female attitudes and lifestyles conspire to oppress women? These questions are the basis for the next chapter.

Notes

1. a) Consider 'the age of chivalry';
b) Tennyson's poetry provides examples of the female stereotype wan and sickly.
2. See T. Thompson, Edwardian Childhoods.
3. For example the work of Peter Laslett.
4. She saw members as mutually interdependent helped by the fact that home and work were often the same place.
5. Women were involved in home industry as of course were men and children.
6. Lewis and Chayter, Introduction to Working Lives of Women in the 17th century.
7. Rousseau, Emile. Basic Books.
8. By 1900 a majority of the children attended elementary school at least and the idea of going to school was generally widely accepted (Ministry of Education Report) 1899-1900, vol 1. The upper classes were also more education conscious and this accounted for the rise in girls sent to school (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Kent, Anabel Farraday 1983).
9. This issue especially concerned the Fabians. Could motherhood be compatible with paid work? These issues are discussed by Lewis and Chayter in their introduction to the work of Alice Clark.
10. This is also revealed through the work of novelists like Mary Gaskell (North and South) and George Eliott (Mill on the Floss).
11. There is a class dimension to this as Bell et al point out. Middle class men may find it easier to take time off from work. But working class men may be less tied up with work as an identity and therefore be more generally available to the family.
12. This identity may be tied with paid employment throughout the social classes. For example the lads in Paul Willis' study, 'Learning to Labour' (1977), became the macho men they admired who worked at men's work.
13. The limitations are that the time chosen for the diary may be atypical, people may forget to fill it in.
14. B. & B. Lawton, The Times, 16 May 1975.

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL POSSIBILITIES

The work of Chapter One was to provide context and background to a study of middle class family life today. The intention was to show how motherhood and fatherhood have histories which are very different from each other, and to show how motherhood and fatherhood today continue to be very different institutions. Despite immense social changes women of all classes continue to be subject to practices which view them as primarily domestic. I have outlined a considerable body of work which points to the continuing responsibility of women for childcare and housework, and the continuing dominance, in the family, of men. I discussed family finance which relates to power in the family.

This chapter will review some of the theoretical perspectives which have been employed to consider inequalities between the sexes. The organisation of this chapter reveals the stages through which I progressed when searching for a theoretical basis to help to explain my research data. It is the archaeology of the dissertation. The reasons for choosing the various theoretical perspectives were not random, although the choice owed much to my interests at the time.

Initially I wanted to read through the major theories which have traditionally offered students a framework for their research in the social sciences. I turned therefore to an influential tradition in sociology, to Marxism, and to psychoanalysis for perspectives on inequality between the sexes. Because I did not find them entirely appropriate to answer my research questions I moved on to other theories about socialisation and then theories loosely concerned with psychology. For each theory or group of theories I considered the possibilities within each for reflecting on

the social basis of sexual inequality. Furthermore I wanted to see what potential exists within each framework for understanding why people might consent to inequality in their own lives. These questions were part of the motivation behind my own research and in seeking for answers I was attempting to discover a framework for my analysis of research material.

Ultimately I came to believe that none of the theoretical frameworks which I consider in this chapter were appropriate to address the issues emerging from my own research material. This then, is a chapter of theories considered but ultimately rejected because I was unable to adapt them for use with my own data. This is not surprising as most of these theoretical frameworks pre-date the debates about equality within the family and are often addressing other kinds of related issues. However these theories about human relations directed me to think through a number of issues and were valuable in helping me to focus on those aspects of the data which I really did want to explain.

I begin with post-war sociology, and the work that I examined suggests that the companionate family does embody a kind of equality. I move on to Marxism which directs us to look at the economic base of society as the root of inequality, while psychoanalysis turns towards the inner development of the psyche for explanations about inequality.

Next I investigate some theories which look at working class life for ideas about how inequality is reproduced. Finally I consider theories in psychology and psychoanalysis which refer to male and female psychology as leading to the development of different lives.

I shall begin by considering the sociological work on the family which has promoted a view of companionate marriage. I shall look at the rationale for these claims and my own research will later discuss to what extent they can be substantiated.

Post-War Sociology

Within Britain and the United States a long tradition of sociological work largely failed to question underlying political ideologies which brought the family into being. Instead the family was accepted as essential. It failed to recognise that individual members in a family might have different interests and therefore 'equality' was discussed within a framework where it was accepted that the lives of women and men were necessarily very different. This tradition includes writers otherwise as different as Talcott Parsons in the USA and Elizabeth Bott and the Newsons in England (1).

In the United States the Functionalist Tradition is often associated with the work of Parsons (2). He started with a fixed set of presuppositions concerned with necessary structures in society for order and conformity and with how children can be socialised into an acceptance of authority. The family is described in terms of 'roles'.

"This role structure may then be roughly represented... The father role is relative to the others high on both power and on 'instrumentality' - hence low on 'expressiveness'. The mother role is high on power and on 'expressiveness' thus low in instrumentality. The son role is low on power but high on instrumentality, the daughter role low on power but high on expressiveness - hence low on instrumentality." (Parsons 1964, p.45).

This is a society of emotional mothers and instrumental fathers. Implicitly the daughter can gain power by becoming a mother - emotionally she already has the potential. The family which Parsons described he suggested was essential for the functioning of industrial society. Questions about the nature of the family were buried in a prescriptive model of society which functioned as a biological organism. Functionalism did move forward in the structuralist functionalist modernisation theory of

Goode and Smelser; they were concerned to relate changes in other areas of society to changes in the family.

In the British sociological work of the fifties and sixties the diversity of family life was acknowledged at some levels for example in the work of Townsend on The Family Life of Old People and Young and Willmott Family and Kinship in East London. These books and others were part of a series of research studies coordinated by the Institute of Community Studies to compare different family structures and styles. However, marriage and the family remained fundamentally unproblematic. For example, in the work of Klein and Myrdal (1963) there is an analysis of women as workers having a dual role as wives without ever extending the critique into the structure of the family which makes domesticity the responsibility of women not men. The ideological underpinnings of family life went unchallenged and it was seen as having changed for the better with the decline of the authoritarian family and the increasing emotional involvement which came to be called the 'companionate family'.

One of the initiators of this kind of analysis was Elizabeth Bott with her work on the family carried out in the 1950s. She studied 20 ordinary couples with young children in and around London. She discerned two main styles of family life. The first was the segregated role couples. The husband and wife lived separate lives with a strict division of household tasks. They spent very little time together. The second family life-style revolved around 'the joint conjugal role relationship'. Underlying the second was the idea of equality demonstrated by companionship and sharing. Marriage essentially embodies a relationship which is different but equal. The conjugal role relationship was characterised by shared interests and tastes, joint friends, shared recreation, and generally loose-knit family networks.

However, although there was joint organisation in a conjugal role relationship some division of labour was essential, because the husband is the 'primary bread-winner' while the wife is the 'mother of young children'. Apart from this, Bott suggests, the division of labour is flexible and involves sharing and interchange of tasks. "Husbands were expected to take a very active part in childcare" (1957, p.79).

This sharing has its limits as the husband is away all day.

"Co-parenthood was considered to be a most vital part of the joint conjugal relationship. Even so the wives carried most of the burden of childcare because, with the exception of those who had full-time jobs, they were at home most of the day." (1971 edition, p.80).

Here Bott fails to point out that the woman is at home all day because she is looking after children. Elizabeth Bott's description of the ideology of the joint conjugal relationship couples remains a recognisable reflection of middle-class family life today - nearly 40 years later.

This unproblematic vision of conjugal cooperation was taken up by the Newsons. Working in Nottingham in the 1960s they began a large study of the child bearing patterns around them. By the time the Newsons began to write about parenthood in 1963, the joint family organisation type had become a stereotype. In the chapter 'Father's place is in the home' they write that the traditional pattern of family life is changing and suggest that "marriage today is ideally envisaged as a partnership in which husband and wife share each other's interests and worries and face all major decisions jointly." (1963, p.133).

However they also see childcare as a mother's job:

"Obviously the care of infants is predominantly a female occupation, and in most normal families the mother is necessarily the central figure in the child's early life." (1963, p.133) (emphasis added).

They were not surprised, therefore to find that fathers were quite selective in the tasks they were willing to undertake for their children; some will not change nappies, others will not push prams.

Ten years later Ronald Fletcher acknowledged that the 'companionate family might constitute a great improvement in family relationships' but suggested that this has 'only been achieved by the more enlightened middle classes' (1973, p.166). Fletcher also pointed out that the modern family experiences 'stresses and strains' because women were extending their lives beyond the family. He suggested that working mothers might lead to neglect of children. "It is felt by many that this employment of married women with children entails some degree of unthinking, but nonetheless harmful child neglect!" (1973, p.179). This was the major problem in what was otherwise an optimistic vision of family life.

At the same time Young and Willmott produced The Symmetrical Family and this was influential in presenting marriage as evolving towards companionship and mutuality. They suggested that an increasing number of marriages reflected Bott's 'companionate' type, but they chose the word 'symmetrical'.

"We think it is close to the facts of the situation as it is now to preserve the notion of difference but ally it to a measure of egalitarianism. In this context the essence of a symmetrical relationship is that it is opposite but similar." (Young and Willmott, 1973, p.2).

In this description of marriage 'egalitarianism' does not imply that men and women lead the same kind of lives. They suggest an 'equal but different' approach to marriage.

This body of sociological work reflected post-war debates about the nature of marriage and was arguably helping to create and reinforce the view of marriage as companionable and mutual. It represented family life

as desirable and increasingly egalitarian. Ann Oakley suggested that social science itself has some responsibility for promoting the possibility that marriage can be an equal partnership (1976). Some current work on the family continues this tradition. Despite giving evidence of the double workload of women in dual career families the Rapoports believe that society is changing and they refer to 'androgynous marriage' (1977).

The companionate family implies some notion of progress towards the good society. Edmund Leach's Reith lectures in 1967 suggested an alternative view.

"Far from being the basis of the good society the family with its narrow privacy and tawdry secrets is the source of all our discontents." (Leach 1967)

Sociologists like Hannah Gavron also had begun to point to women's position in the home as the title of her book The Captive Wife indicates (Gavron 1966). However it was clear to me that the main traditional sociological view of the family was not going to offer a framework in which to discuss divisions and conflicts between family members.

In a search for other views of the family which did not suppress inequality and conflict, Marxism appeared to offer a more promising framework. Marx placed conflict and oppression at the centre of his theories of social organisation.

Marx and the Socialist Feminists

Although Marx is often claimed as sociological territory his writing is very different in intention and tenor from the preceding work. Marx himself wrote very little about women's position in society although an impression can be gained from his early work on the family in his early

debates with Hegel. Ros Coward (1983) discusses how he begins with a view of the natural family which becomes part of a complex interaction between wealth, private property and the state. In the early dialogues with Hegel, Marx pointed out that the simple relations within the family group are transformed by the accumulation of wealth and the division of labour on which capitalist social and economic relations rest.

Although Marx concentrated on a detailed economic analysis of capitalist society, the ideas about the real nature of family life did not just simply disappear. They remained implicit in later work but it was left to Engels to draw out the material history of the family and relations between the sexes.

In 1884 Engels wrote the Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State and as the title implies this was a further attempt in drawing out the relationship of the family to the economic base. He was undoubtedly influenced by such work as Bachofen's studies of matriarchy and the debates which took place during the later 19th century about the matriarchal nature of early society. He also suggested^d an early matriarchal structure of society which gave way to patriarchy with changing social forces. Engels discussed^d how transitions in the family are crucial to different stages of economic development. This work specifically addressed the issues of women in society and together with Bebel's 'Women under socialism' it was important in encouraging a discussion among socialists of women and socialism.

For the early Marxist feminists like Clara Zerkina, Rosa Luxemburg and Alexandra Kollontai, women's issues were closely tied to a commitment to the overthrow of capitalist social relations. Economic factors were taken to be the sole cause of women's subordination. Kollontai partially saw the

problems in terms of monogamous marriage. But Kollontai's ideas on free sexual expression found little support in post-revolutionary Russia when the family became elevated as a political and moral necessity. A transformation of relations between the sexes did not become part of early socialist agendas whether in theory or in practice in socialist countries. The importance given to class issues tended to overwhelm other social divisions like sex or ethnic background (Kollontai 1977 edition).

Today the "uneasy relationship" (3) between Marxism and feminism continues. To allow Marxism to address feminist issues women are often submerged in an ongoing Marxist analysis which remains principally concerned with relations under capitalism.

A recent example of this has been the domestic labour debate. Briefly this debate has centred upon the process whereby labour is sold more cheaply than the value of goods the labourer produces. The capitalist benefits by selling goods at a level higher than the wages, which gives surplus value. Women's domestic work helps to reproduce labour power for which women receive no wages, thereby contributing to the quantity of surplus value recovered by the capitalist. The terms in which it was discussed reflected the concerns and terminology of Marxism rather than feminism.

This preoccupation with the class struggle and relationship to the means of production often means the sexual politics of a gendered society disappear into class solidarity. Some issues such as domestic violence, incest and rape cannot be addressed within Marxist categories, so that as a theory of oppression and power relations it is limited by what Catherine McKinnon calls:

"the failure of Marxism adequately to address intimacy" (McKinnon 1983).

The focus developing in my study made it difficult to see how Marxist theory could apply. Because of the limitations of classical Marxist theory most socialist feminists now see their work as building bridges between Marxist analysis and feminist analysis. Veronica Beechey describes her work as "exploring the relationship between feminism and forms of class struggle" (1979, p.67). Certainly Marxism has valuable lessons about the sources and maintenance of oppression. But the attempt to reconceptualise feminism in terms of Marxism suggest that women's experience is meaningful only when related to the class struggle.

Catherine McKinnon sees feminism and Marxism as analogous explanatory schemes but finally argues that one is not reducible to the other. "Sexuality is to feminism what work is to Marxism; that which is most one's own yet most taken away." (McKinnon op cit).

To use concepts discussed by Marx (and Freud) in looking at how oppression is reproduced is not necessarily to accept that the areas of debate must be limited to those delineated by Marx (or Freud) a century ago. Imposing Marxist categories on the experience of women results in most of women's experience remaining outside the categories. The relationship between labour and capital has an explanatory force but fails to appreciate how gender is salient at every moment throughout life in a way that is just as important as the idea of class struggle.

As women our history and our experiences are very different from those of men. Virginia Woolf wrote persuasively in 1933.

"The two classes (male and female) still differ enormously... Take the facts of education. Your class has been educated at public schools and university for five or six hundred years, ours for sixty. Take the fact of property. Your class possesses in its own right and not through marriage practically all the capital, all the land, all the valuables and all the patronage in England. Our class possesses in its own right and not through marriage practically none of the capital, none of the land, none of the valuables and none of the

patronage in England... It would seem to follow then as an indisputable fact that 'we' - meaning by we a whole made up of body, brain and spirit influenced by memory and tradition - must still differ in some essential respects from 'you', whose body, brain and spirit have been so differently trained and are so differently influenced by memory and tradition. Though we see the same world we see it through different eyes." (Virginia Woolf 1938, p.34).

Virginia Woolf is obviously referring here to the upper class but arguably, when she wrote in 1938 continuing to the present, the life experiences of women in all classes were very different from men's experience.

To reduce the history of women to the class struggle is to deny the power relationship between women and men which have always made life different for each sex, whatever social class. In asking how our oppression is reproduced answers about relationship to the means of production must inevitably leave out the emotional pressures which also, arguably, compel women into sexual oppression. Gender is not reducible to class although the relations of domination may take specific forms among different classes. Therefore without considerable reworking, there was no simple way of using theoretical ideas based on Marxism to explore the internal dynamics of family life for my research purposes.

Issues about increasing equality or inequality within the family are difficult to address without a theory which relates specifically to sexual oppression. The need to examine the internal dynamics of family life led me to consider psychoanalytic ideas as providing a possible framework for analysing my own research material. At least, for Freud the internal workings of the family were a central theme.

Freud and Psychoanalytic Perspectives on the Family and Gender

For Freud the family was central to the formation of a gendered psychology. His view of the family is a universal account which ironically drew on his experiences and those of his clients in the bourgeois family in Vienna at the turn of the century, and the intense relationships which lay at its heart. He concentrated on the relationship between the biological family and the acquisition of gendered subjectivity which develops through early emotional experiences in relationships with parents.

Because of the centrality of the family in his theories on development of sexuality Freud justified his ideas through his history of the human family in Totem and Taboo. Here he hypothesised about the early history of the human race and was concerned with two main themes which also interested contemporary anthropologists - namely totemism and the incest taboo. His conjectures about early history led him to suggest that the establishment of patriarchy (or at least the acknowledgement of paternity) was an advance which is a precondition of civilisation.

Coward (1983) points out that by the time Freud wrote Totem and Taboo he had encountered major problems in deciding whether unconscious structures are acquired through each individual's experience in the family or whether these psychic structures can be internalised without individual experience. In the elaboration of his theories of gender development his early researches with patients led him to conclude that an actual event preceded individual development towards male or female sexuality. However the event that led to neurosis was usually traumatic for the child.

Coward explains:

"Freud was maintaining that what his studies had shown was the frequency of a 'traumatic' event in childhood. It seemed from his researches that countless so-called neurotics had been seduced in childhood by parents" (Coward 1983).

Freud later decided that the seduction of children was usually a fantasy of the child's related to their sexual desire for their parent (4).

In Totem and Taboo Freud gave explanations about the development of patriarchy and gave his ideas on the family, a history, of sorts, and a cultural structure in which child-rearing takes place (Freud 1977 edition). This alleviated the necessity to assert that individuals all had the same experience (eg. the sexes seeing each other naked or seeing parents having sexual intercourse) and allowed individuals to absorb cultural patterns. However the problem was not solved permanently for Freud and he returned to this issue in his later work.

He suggested that children are originally bi-sexual. The implications of this are that the sexes have no essential attraction for each other. Girls especially must undergo radical changes in the form of their sexuality to become heterosexual women.

This undermining of original heterosexuality deserves close comment. Freud was concerned to reveal that there is no anatomical sex difference which is primary or of the level of emotion or feeling. Psychoanalysis describes the process of subjection in differentiating female from male before each finds a place in patriarchy. As Gayle Rubin suggests sex difference becomes established through an act of "psychic brutality" by which men and women are forced into their sexual mould (Rubin 1975).

Central to psychoanalysis is the idea of the unconscious - the repository of repressed desire. Accordingly gender becomes inscribed on the unconscious during the Oedipal phase. Freud himself cites the Oedipal drama as the crucial moment for the developing subject and neuroses stem

from this point. The girl's relationship with her father structured through the resolution of the Oedipal drama pre-figures all future sexual relationships with men. The female unconscious therefore is active in the maintenance of patriarchal structure.

Psychoanalysis has contributed to debates on the family and the role of women in society. Some feminists insist that it illuminates these issues while not denying human emotion and subjectivity. Jacqueline Rose points out that "it allows into the political arena problems of subjectivity (subjectivity as a problem) which tend to be suppressed from other forms of political debate." (Rose 1982, p.19).

However, there has been considerable debate about the relevance of psychoanalysis to feminism and whether it is in fact the liberating theory claimed by its adherents. The theory is certainly not monolithic and for that reason many feminists have restricted their comments to Freud's work. Even within psychoanalysis itself women analysts have modified the original theoretical base described by Freud.

Karen Horney challenged Freud's theory of femininity from a female standpoint as early as the 1930s. Together with Clara Thompson, Horney attempted to debate the social and cultural oppression of women (Horney 1980 edition). They refused to concede that women's oppression related simply to ingrained psychic patterns. Together with Klein (1985 edition), Horney opposed Freud's phallocentrism as the only organising principle of society. These challenges to the orthodox theory were continued after the war in the work of Simone de Beauvoir who wrote about penis envy and saw it as being a symbolic issue in the context of male privilege in our society rather than the jealous desire for a male body (De Beauvoir 1972).

The resurgence of the women's movement in the sixties saw a rejection of Freud by many feminist writers and this prompted Juliet Mitchell to attempt to rehabilitate Freud in 1974 with her book Psychoanalysis and Feminism. She used the work of Friedan, Greer and Firestone as examples to discuss how feminists have misunderstood Freud and exemplified him as the enemy. She discusses how Friedan for example had commented on biological determinism in Freud. Mitchell argues that Freud maintained the opposite. He postulated bisexuality in infants and emphasised the non-biological factors in the development of sexuality, discussing the relationship which we all have to the phallus and how it structures life, thought and the unconscious.

Mitchell argues that by understanding how the unconscious operates it is possible to gain some insight into the functioning of patriarchal culture. Her reading of Freud is that male and female are cultural categories. "Man and Woman are made in culture" (1974, p.131). However Mitchell agrees with Freud about the importance of childhood experience. If man and woman are made in culture, for Freud and Mitchell the job is finished at an early age.

There are a number of criticisms to make of Mitchell's reading of Freud. The first concerns her belief that adult life is an unfolding of a gendered subjectivity set in infancy and early childhood. Consequently she sees little revolutionary potential in women's lives and has to suggest the dissolution of the Oedipus complex as the end of patriarchy which will take place 'when patriarchal culture becomes redundant'.

It is possible, however, that gender is not so deeply inscribed in the unconscious as Mitchell suggests. Besides, what does 'gender' include? Is it sexuality or is it more than this? The continuing effect of culture and the way it reinforces gender through life is barely acknowledged.

The unconscious mind may indeed be set in a pattern, but if so, this is mediated through events, circumstances and social structures which exist in the present. Desire may be buried in past experience but it is constantly evoked and maintained in the present. Messages about male/female relationships and family life surround us, setting the parameters of reasonable expectations. It is not possible to know how far gender is fixed at an early stage.

Desire for life-styles which are considered inappropriate for one's sex find little support in a society where gender sets life's agenda. It is easy to give up ambitions and desires when their fulfilment is constantly blocked through lack of opportunity, which is in its own way 'fixed' at an early stage of life, and Leonard rightly pointed out there is a pragmatic element in women's choices (Leonard 1983). When the women in the present study decided to give up paid work to concentrate on childcare, they were acknowledging that there is very little support or opportunity for women to have children and continue with paid work. Present contingencies are very important in decision-making.

There are numerous other criticisms of Freud. One is certainly the universality he claims for his theories. He sees the Oedipus complex as an inevitable aspect of childhood, as he writes, for example, in The Psychopathology of Everyday Life

"I have found, in my own case too, falling in love with the mother and jealousy of the father, and I now regard it as a universal event of early childhood..." (Freud Letter to Fliess, 1897, p.265).

Leaving aside the ethnocentricity - not to say egocentricity - of these claims, this view of the inevitability of certain Oedipal patterns is a sweeping statement and this is strongly disputed by Alice Miller (1985)

who reconsiders some of Freud's cases without resorting to Oedipal complex theory. Elizabeth Wilson points out that psychoanalysis achieved a certain doctrinal status in our academic culture and yet it is only one explanatory scheme among many and one which makes sexuality the major determinant of personal identity. Wilson denies that psychoanalysis can even answer fundamental questions about the way sexuality is inscribed into the unconscious (Wilson 1981, p.72). I suggest that Freud produced an imaginative theory of how patriarchal culture is inscribed into the psyche, but it remains a theory and one which depends on being universally applicable, which is difficult to establish.

However psychoanalysis does have certain advantages over theories about economics when a study of relationships within the family is contemplated. It can at least address issues about intimacy and desire and problems of subjectivity. In her defence of psychoanalysis Jacqueline Rose points to the traumatic relationship women have with femininity.

"Psychoanalysis becomes one of the few places in our culture where it is recognised as more than a fact of individual pathology that most women do not slip painlessly into their roles as women, if indeed they do at all." (Rose 1982).

This awareness was not totally absent from the work of Freud. He wrote:

"I repeat, that women, when they are subjected to the disillusionments of marriage, fall ill of severe neuroses which permanently darken their lives." (Freud 1908, p.181).

It is clear that psychoanalysis has offered feminists a space in which femininity and subjectivity can be discussed. Unfortunately the implications of original bi-sexuality have not really been taken up and have been limited by the suggestions of a universal account of emotions within the family. This negates much of the radical potential of Freud's

ideas on sexuality. In his defence Freud did consider sexuality problematic and his attention constantly centres on the acquisition of gendered subjectivity. But the ensuing picture of patriarchy is a limiting and stifling concept which, as I have discussed contains many unresolved contradictions.

It is not therefore possible to employ a psychoanalytic framework in a simple way for an analysis of equality within the family. For Freud and for a large number of psychoanalysts, the issue can never really be raised. There can be no serious discussion of equality where it is believed that women and men undergo such different psychic programming. They suggest that differences are set at an early age and the family must duplicate them despite all attempts at neutralising sex differences which current moves towards non-sexist child-rearing might involve (see Statham 1986). For the present research, an appreciation that psychoanalysis offers space for the discussion of subjectivity is tempered by unwillingness to accept the restrictions on how this subjectivity is to be understood.

Post-Freudian Debates on the Family and the Role of Women

Contradictions in Freud's work, mainly the oscillation between social and biological explanations, have not stopped psychoanalysis from becoming an area of tremendous interest after his death. Freud's work has been used to reflect upon the family, and I shall use the writings of Laing, Lasch and Donzelot to discuss some of the perspectives on the family in the last 20 years and to see if these three authors offer a framework in which current family organisation might be discussed. Although very different, these three authors are interesting because of the images of women which

they portray - images of women as potentially malevolent and destructive forces, which find an echo in many cultural stereotypes.

Chronologically, R.D. Laing in the early seventies was of course writing as a psychoanalyst after Freud, but he remained a pre-Freudian in the sense that his vision of the family owed more to his own experiences at the Tavistock than to Freudian theory. He might be more properly described as coming from a psycho-dynamic tradition which was popular in the 1970s (6).

In Laing's families, each member 'attempts to regulate the life of the other in order to preserve his own' (p.13) and family unity is achieved often at great cost - in his studies, schizophrenia of one of the family members is the price. Laing's work often depicts a mother who is an intrusive and possessive parent. However, Laing does not really question the role of mothers in society. He fails to recognise that motherhood today is a relationship whereby the mother is held responsible for the physical and psychic health of her child. The child's development is mainly her concern. In the formative years of the child's life, mothers are frequently isolated with the child and encouraged into a deep attachment. It is not surprising if mothers become unable to separate themselves from their children having invested most of their adult lives in their care. Laing appears to romanticise schizophrenia because he fails to relate it to the wider social structure. He hints at this.

"Everyone who has made a close study of the families of schizophrenics appears to agree that much, or even all of the apparent irrationality of the individual finds its rationality in its original family context. The family as a whole now appears irrational. Does the irrationality in the family find its rationality when placed in its context?" (Laing 1965).

However, Laing really fails to take up the implications of this statement, by looking at society itself and its effect on the family.

Not all work in the psychoanalytic tradition finds the family to be a problem. Representative of the pro-family group is Christopher Lasch, who uses psychoanalytic concepts to defend the family. He draws directly on Freud. Oedipal socialisation and rivalry with the father are central tenets of Lasch's analysis. The lack of resolution of the Oedipal complex he sees as a key to American culture. He extols the family as a defence against the manipulation and domination inherent in modern society.

"The gradual erosion of authoritarianism and the authoritarian family which went on throughout the liberal phase of bourgeois society has had an unexpected outcome: the re-establishment of political despotism in a form based not on the family but on its dissolution. Instead of liberating the individual from external coercion the decay of family life subjects him to new forms of domination while at the same time weakening his ability to resist them." (Lasch 1978, p.91).

Lasch warns against the decline of the strength of the family. He sees the increasing intervention of the State into the family as an invasion of the body and spirit of the individual. It is not women's role within the family which Lasch finds problematic, but the feminist forces outside, which are aiding the destruction of family life. Lasch identifies feminism as part of today's 'flight from feeling'.

Both Laing and Lasch manifest deeply held prejudices which are two opposing stereotypes of the female destruction of society. For Laing the neurotic and possessive mother destroys the family from within. For Lasch the unfeeling, emasculating feminist destroys the family from outside.

The work of Donzelot offers a commentary on the influence of psychoanalysis on modern society and family life. He uses the method suggested by Foucault (7) of deconstructing social knowledge to show its history. Like Lasch his themes are also domination of the individual

through the invasion of the family. Donzelot highlights the relation between the family, medicine, psychology and social work. By working through the family, individuals are brought under state scrutiny and control. The control has expanded to permeate the intimate aspects of ourselves. Donzelot especially warns against 'experts', usually people who have studied psychology or psychoanalysis. These experts see the family as an area of social breakdown.

"In these discourses the family has changed from being a pillar of society to being the place where society constantly threatens to come unglued." (1980, p.219).

Donzelot suggests that counsellors, psychologists and psychoanalysts see themselves as helping to save society. As he writes with irony

"Facing this disarray, there is only the little army of counsellors and psychologists and they are always insufficient in number to meet the demands of defenceless parents, of lost children and unhappy couples of the misunderstood, of those who have not learned how to live." (op. cit.).

These experts would not have been able to gain their present status if it had not been for the collaboration of women, Donzelot suggests; mothers have worked in partnership with doctors and psychiatrists, and this has enabled the family to be transformed from an area of privacy and retreat to be drawn into the increasing control of state agencies. Donzelot suggests, however, that the invasion of family life by medical and psychological experts has been to the advantage of women, increasing their power in the family by undermining the old patriarchal family.

Writing before Donzelot, Ehrenreicht and English (1976) had already rejected the idea that the rise of the experts benefitted women. In For Her Own Good (1979) they discuss how women themselves have been taken over

by mainly male experts, so few areas of women's expertise remain. Gynaecology, obstetrics and paediatrics, they suggest, all used to be areas of women's expertise from which women have been displaced.

The post-Freudian debates outlined above leave very little potential for equality within the family. Their images of women pre-empt any serious discussion, by projecting a view of the family as potentially sustaining, if only women did not spoil everything by destructive, uninformed or even pathological behaviour.

Sexual Inequality and Class

This section will consider authors who have written about the effect of social class and peer group inter-relationships on the acquisition of gender. In this work, the family is an important dimension but not necessarily the focus of the work. At this stage of the analysis of my own research material, I had read Marx and Freud, and I was looking for explanations which moved beyond the family towards theories of the effect of cultural background on the individual and the initiation of individuals into a culture. These writers look mainly at working class culture within which men and women lead very different lives. In my own research I had already noticed the effect of imitation and the acceptance of certain standards of mothering, so the idea of being socialised into a role was already an aspect of my study.

By socialisation, I mean that these writers suggest that children learn to behave as male and female by imitation; they acquire gender roles by developing attitudes and responses and learning to become gendered adults. This means that the acquisition of gender roles is understood as problematic. These writers point to conflict in the developing of a male

and female identity but finding a place in society demands the acceptance of a certain gendered role. They also point to an active participation of the young, particularly working class young people, in their socialisation into femininity and masculinity. Most of these writers point out how the force of culture undermines the possibility of genuine choices for most working class young people, so that equality is not part of life's agenda.

As early as 1956, Joyce Joseph was interested in girl's ideas about home and work, as a member of a research group which tried to probe teenage girls' attitudes. The girls were asked to write essays on how they thought their future lives might develop. Ninety percent of them talked about marriage. Joseph pointed to the 'new' trend of women working after marriage - implying that people changed with changing social expectations.

"Most of these girls are not thinking in terms of carrying on in a vocation throughout their married lives, which may be interrupted for the period in which they have the care of children, but rather in terms of home-making as their vocation, and full-time or part-time work outside the home as a secondary interest." (Joseph 1961, p.183).

Although these views may appear reactionary today, at least these girls considered taking paid work. But they continued to see marriage as their full-time vocation and the job as of peripheral interest; women are still assumed to have their priorities in the same order today. This justifies part-time work and low pay while women are not seen as major wage earners.

There has been no comparable study in schools to the research of 1956. However a recent study by Prout and Prendergast does discuss the ways teenage girls continue to expect to become mothers. Their interviews centred on the construction of motherhood and the active role that children play in that construction. They asked the 15-year-old girls to describe what life is like for mothers at home with a young child. Most suggested

it was a fulfilling life, even though this did not match with the girls' own observations of their mothers' lives.

The girls frequently pointed to their mothers' depression and described it realistically but saw it as something 'normal' associated with motherhood. Prout and Prendergast point out that "their own experience did not count as knowledge in this respect... what did count as knowledge was that which is widely available - how mothers ought to feel and behave." (1984 p.522). The conflicting relationship between proper mothering and the reality of their mothers' lives remained an unresolved tension in the Prout and Prendergast study, and yet the girls knew that they would take on this ambivalence for themselves. They did not see any other alternatives.

Early socialisation is reinforced by lack of other opportunities. It is this kind of tension which is a central theme in The Tidy House (1983) by Caroline Steedman. This is an account of three working class eight-year-old girls writing a story. The story revolves around 'The Tidy House' and Caroline Steedman interprets this as the girls constructing a story from their daily lives to be used to investigate the pattern of their future lives.

"The tension between the physical desire for babies - the looks, the glances, their pretty ways and the weariness and burden of their presence... informs every page of the Tidy House." (Steedman 1983).

The tension here is between the desire for children, the knowledge that they are the inevitable future for women and the reality of the mundane, repetitive life that childbearing involves. The girls were already familiar with that life.

"The long hours spent in adult female company, the walks to the shops, up and down to the nursery schools, visits, cups of tea - 'stand still and shut up' - all that listening gave the children access to a

symbolic form of this life, that they could manipulate and change in written words." (Steedman, p.22).

Caroline Steedman suggests the possibility that this reflection on the conditions of women's lives could be used to give girls an understanding of the processes which shackle them to domesticity. The girls in 'The Tidy House' were working class, living in a social priority area.

In the work of Angela McRobbie the working class construction of femininity is also central to the view of motherhood in the 'Mill Lane Youth Club'. She suggests that the biological fact of motherhood was accepted as resulting in housework and childcare and as the unnegotiable and inevitable lifestyle for mothers. Angela McRobbie points out that marriage is an economic necessity for the girls.

"Recognising their own economic dependence and aware of the problems which girls and women experience sexually, outside of marriage, the working class girl, by the time she is ready to leave school, automatically thinks of marriage" (McRobbie 1978, p.107).

For the girls their close friendships and the ideology of romance made the future bearable.

The developing identity of boys into men is the subject of Paul Willis' book Learning to Labour. In investigating 'how working class kids get working class jobs' ('kids' means boys) Willis suggests how an anti-school group of boys take on the working class culture of becoming manual workers. He discusses how this is a resistance to the middle class values of the school which promotes escape from the working class through examination success. Willis describes this in terms of identification with the working class. 'The lads' in Willis' study eradicate contradictions from their experience by associating themselves with manual work, which itself has overtones of masculinity. Willis' book is centrally about the

force of 'culture' and how the acquisition of a masculine identity is inevitable for some boys (Willis 1977).

Despite the value in terms of their own analysis, none of the approaches to the developing identity of the adolescent as male and female could be adapted to focus on problems emerging from my research. The concentration on the lives of working class pupils means that womanhood and femininity and manhood and masculinity are specified in relation to current and projected future lives. These studies present a vision of pupils' lives in which they are constrained in choice and personal autonomy. However valid in their own terms these research studies do not set out to explain the continuation of the ideology of femininity and masculinity among other sections of the population who have greater economic opportunities and career possibilities.

Even among the working class, not all girls and boys inevitably take over the lifestyle of their parents. However there is little space within these socialisation theories to discuss why and how some individuals might make other choices. This is understandable however because these are not the issues being addressed. The process by which individual men and women opt into a certain kind of lifestyle and the motives behind this are seen by these writers as largely determined by the force of 'culture'. For my purposes there was no way of building on these theories in my research, however valuable as background material. Those people in my study with working class origins had made very different choices from the young people in Willis' study. They had resisted the force of culture.

These writers do show that the lives of working class women and men continue to be very different. ^{As Jane Sealy points out in her study of women's} Activities and attitudes embedded in the ^{and} 'family ideology' seem to hold a logic of their own which can be 'internalised' despite their manifest unfairness with respect to the

(Sewell 1935)
allocation of responsibilities. School and family life are important in the reproduction of women's domesticity and curtailed career opportunities. Researchers have described the process which produces women's lives as female and men's lives as masculine. But the process by which individuals agree to organise their lives in this mould - the process by which women think of themselves as mothers and men think of themselves as fathers is still not revealed. However, work on adolescents has suggested that the acquisition of a gendered identity is a product of conflict and resistance.

Female Psychology

Turning to work which considers this process of acceptance of very different female and male lifestyles I found a group of theories which were all based on the idea of a female psychology. This clearly relates back to the work of Freud and his suggestion that, despite original bisexuality, we end up as gendered adults and this process is deeply etched into psychic structures.

Unlike Freud, the following writers all assume that increasing equality between the sexes is a possibility and they analyse the factors which inhibit its development. In my research at this stage I was discovering very different responses from women and men about relationships, especially with their children, and therefore I found the idea of a female psychology persuasive, although I later came to reject it as a framework for my own study.

In the last few years a number of writers have drawn explanations for women's acceptance of domesticity and maternal identity from theories drawn from psychology and psychoanalysis. While not rejecting the force of culture in forming male and female identities, explanations are often in

terms of psychic patterns usually established during infancy and childhood. This means that these writers are often in broad agreement that it is mothers through mothering who create similar patterns in their daughters and not in their sons. Most of the interesting work has concentrated on mothers, but fathers are not ignored.

In Outside_In,_Inside_Out Eichenbaum and Orbach (1983) have an explanation of women's development which highlights the ways in which women are encouraged to take care of others and not therefore express their own needs. It is the mother-child relationship which is crucial to the identity. Mothers have a very close bond with their daughters.

"A mother's feelings about herself and her identification with her daughter are reproduced in all mother-daughter relationships. They are the key features in the development of a woman's ego" (1983, p.34).

The mother within patriarchy is unwittingly responsible for the bondage of the daughter. The point is taken up in the work of Nancy Chodorow. In The_ Reproduction_of_Mothering Chodorow locates her work in the 'object relations' tradition of psychoanalysis. Her argument is that women are produced not only as heterosexual but as maternal through the resolution of the Oedipus complex.

"Development in the infantile period and particularly the emergence and resolution of the Oedipus complex entail different psychological reactions, needs and experiences which cut off or curtail relational possibilities for parenting in boys and keep them open and extend them in girls." (Chodorow 1978)

This explanation does at least mean that Chodorow is not simply suggesting that the mother-child relationship is responsible for girls being prone to domesticity and boys' avoidance of it. The explanation involves the wider forces of patriarchal organisation. However this is a thoroughly Freudian

explanation. This search for origins of sexual identity is the underlying theme of psychoanalysis and places an emphasis on early childhood experience. All relations are reduced to the early experience of relationships within the family which are indelibly etched into the psyche and their dynamic sets a pattern which is difficult to alter (except through the intervention of psychoanalytic therapy). Chodorow argues that gender is reproduced through mothering within patriarchy.

Chodorow's emphasis on infancy as the crucial period for the development of gender ignores many other influences on gender development. As Wendy Hollway points out,

"self knowledge is mediated through institutions and practices in the present. The social and cultural life of this society is structured around gender differences. Gender is reinforced continuously in the present" (Hollway 1984).

This point is brought out forcefully by Pauline Bart in her critique of Chodorow.

"Every institution, every media presentation, every significant other spoke as with one voice saying 'Aren't you pregnant yet? You won't be really happy until you have a baby and you'll regret it later if you don't'." (Bart 1982, p.10).

Bart insists that the pressure on women to become mothers and find satisfaction from motherhood is a tremendous social force. The economic and structural constraints on mothers make it a certain kind of institution which is lived out in certain inevitable patterns. The individual's experience varies but the structure remains. Bart suggests that socialisation and reinforcement of the ideology of motherhood are far more powerful forces than Chodorow allows.

The work of Jane Selby also criticises both the Freudian tradition and Chodorow when she describes how adult contingencies were often overwhelming in the lives of the women PhD students she studied. Marriage and motherhood were both positively reconsidered by the women in her study when employment difficulties arose such as the end of a research contract or failure to get a job when the PhD was finished.

The structure of oppression in society is a factor which leads women to choose motherhood. As Jane Selby points out motherhood means the repression of other desires and fantasies - desires for careers and independence which can only be achieved by women at great personal cost. (Selby 1985).

In the work of Ilene Philipson these issues about women as a problem, or more specifically mothers as a problem, are a central concern. She asks how motherhood has gathered the potential to become the intense and destructive relationship which has been diagnosed as pathological. She looks at many of the cases written up by psychoanalysts and psychiatrists and tries to explore the issues about how this construction of motherhood has been fuelled by psychoanalysis itself.

Mothers who cling onto their children are seen as a major problem. Ilene Philipson asks why it is so difficult for children to become independent in our society. "Why would mothers react to their children's movement towards autonomy with ambivalence?... Why would there be no-one else in the child's environment to offset or minimise problems in the mother-child relationship?" (1982, p.33).

Her answer lies in the isolation of women in the home, their relegation to the 'private sphere' and the over-investment in their children. She suggests that a mother who solves problems about her dissatisfaction with "a lonely unchallenging life through focussing all her

interests on her children" may discover when the children have grown up that this solution was entirely inadequate. Part of the reason for this entanglement lies in the way that the desire for children and the wish to act directly in the world are set in conflict. Motherhood tends to isolate women from production and the ideology of motherhood affirms this as necessary and appropriate.

A writer who has discussed these issues drawing on psychological material is Colette Dowling. She suggests that women retreat into motherhood because they are afraid. In 'The Cinderella Complex' (1984) she acknowledges the effect of patriarchal relations on women's lives but accuses women of harbouring a 'hidden fear of independence'. Her work strongly reflects the American Dream. Individualism, ambition and acquisition are seen as desirable and appropriate attributes for women as they are for men. She describes a number of women who fail to compete, who fail to take initiative and fail to become successful at work.

Quoting psychiatrists and psychologists she comes close to suggesting female emotional development as pathological.

"Psychologists have known for some time that women's affiliative needs are stronger than men's but only recently have studies of female children begun to zero in on the reason: because of a profound, deep-seated doubt in their own competence which begins in early childhood, girls become convinced that they must have protection, if they are going to survive. This belief is bred into women by misguided social expectations and by the fears of parents." (Dowling 1981, p.94).

Her explanation draws on psychology but is also in part a cultural explanation. Her main aim in the book is to exhort women to overcome their inability to compete, to stop colluding in their oppression and to join the men out in the world. My own study suggests some caution about taking this view of middle class career oriented men as models for women to emulate.

Apart from the work of Ilene Philipson these writers largely fail to draw out the full extent to which motherhood is incompatible with paid work. This conflict is under-emphasised while the aspects of collusion by women in maintaining oppressive structures is a focus of some of this work.

Writing which draws on psychology and psychoanalysis has often pre-empted genuine debate about how gender is internalised by having already agreed to the idea of a specific male or female psychology. I shall suggest that a close study of the lives of women can reveal the rationality behind the choices they make and the way they limit their desires to ones which are 'female'. This can be done without recourse to an explanation beginning with a female psychology.

Conclusion

The work of this section has been to investigate the way motherhood and fatherhood have been portrayed and understood by a number of writers from different traditions. This is to consider issues about why men and women live different lives and how these differences come to be perpetuated, especially in relation to parenthood.

However convincing when considered in their own terms, I came to realise that I would not be doing justice to my research material if I filtered it through any of the above kinds of theories. In the end they turned out to be inappropriate for considering my research issues.

For different reasons, theories generated from the work of Marx and Freud offer little space in which to consider issues about sexual equality and women's oppression. In Marx the subject is barely considered, and Freud pre-empts debate by his view of women within patriarchy. Other writers attribute gender roles and therefore parent roles to culture and

socialisation but this does not explain how individuals came to accept roles and lifestyles which are arguably not in their interest. The focus of most of this work is on the group and peer group pressure. I have also rejected writing which implies a female psychology or male psychology which works to the resolution of conflicts in stereotypical ways. This does not explain why many people live stereotypical lives and some do not. Nor does it allow for the economic and social realities which constrain choice.

I would suggest that there is a space for understanding the choices people make about family life and parenthood which does not draw on the idea of a female psychology nor does it see individuals as merely fitting into culture. An investigation of the lives of women might reveal the rationality behind desires and decisions which are apparently not to their advantage. A similar examination of the lives of men might also reveal their motives and their conceptions of equality whereby different standards apply to their wives and themselves.

What sense can be made of the claim that parental roles are now changing and men are taking an increasing part in childcare and domestic labour? Can women's oppression be explained in terms of political factors alone - low pay, problems over childcare, etc - or is there an underlying female psychology which pre-disposes women to a position of inferiority? I have moved away from this suggestion by showing that these explanations deny the conflicts which individuals face.

Instead I propose to examine closely the lives and explanations of middle class couples living in a middle class residential area. Through this examination I suggest that the rationality which underlies the choices which people make will become apparent. Although equality may not feature in their lives, perhaps middle class women find other compensations in the role of wife and mother which makes the role acceptable. In the next

chapter I shall describe my research strategy including a discussion of the theoretical orientations I used to look at conflicting explanations in the lives of the families I studied.

Notes

1. Leonard draws attention to the ways in which sociological work has reflected rather than questioned the values of family life (Leonard 1983).
2. Functionalism influenced a generation of post-war sociologists in Britain as well as the USA.
3. This term was used by Heidi Hartmann in Abel, E. and Abel, E. (1983) Signs Reader, Women Gender and Scholarship, University of Chicago Press.
4. Recent debates on child abuse put this into an interesting context - see Kitzinger 1987.
5. Infantile Genital Organisation 1923.
6. He was also (or claimed to be) influenced by Marxism and existentialism.
7. As discussed in 'The History of Sexuality', 1981, Pelican.

CHAPTER 3

THE ANALYSIS OF ACCOUNTS

Chapter One had two main aims. The first was to look at the history and context of family life to discuss how both the family and parenthood do have a history of change and what we see today is not some 'natural' pre-ordained order. The second aim was to look at the current state of family life and to suggest that the lives of men and women remain very different. The family is a reflection of relations of power whereby men have more financial control and more choice than women. Men also generally undertake less of the hard domestic labour.

Chapter Two investigated writing about the family and the acquisition of gender to review what theories have been advanced about the psychological, social and economic differences between women and men and by what means these differences are perpetuated. A number of theories were considered and the main criteria for their selection was the part they played in the archaeology of the thesis. These were theories or sets of ideas which I had explored over a period of years, and which I had hoped would provide a framework for the thesis. Eventually all the theories in Chapter Two were rejected as a basis for explanation although many of the ideas continued to inform later discussions about theory. This was not a rejection of the theories themselves, which in other contexts, answering different research issues might be valuable and appropriate. However I felt that for my purposes none of the theoretical frameworks discussed in Chapter Two really directly addressed the concerns emerging from my research data. The work of this chapter is to discuss some of the theory which I did find useful and did use to underpin the analysis. I shall

consider some of the concepts which I needed to investigate before undertaking any analysis of the material.

The theoretical position developed in these sections informs my analysis of the data. This emphasises the different lives of men and women and how these are justified or explained by them. In later sections I describe the practicalities of collecting and analysing research materials. This description includes the selection of families for study and the interviews themselves. The analysis and presentation of material followed two stages. The first was a wide use of observation and interview techniques. The second was a more intense focusing on individual cases. In this considerations of gender, parental roles and contradictions guided my interests together with the theoretical framework discussed here.

In collecting and analysing this research material it became a focus of the work to describe these differences which remain in the lives of men and women within my research community. While trying to reflect on the continuing appeal of the family, it is relevant to consider the range of possibilities open to women and the power and powerlessness invested in them. Equality of opportunity is a limited concept in relations between the sexes because of unacknowledged and far reaching social inequalities. I began therefore to think about theory in a rather different way. Rather than searching for one theory that would encompass all the research material, I considered some of the key concepts which I felt I would need to explain or discuss issues arising from my research material, and then I reviewed literature around these issues. The issues which became the focus of this work were first power in a social context asking how do groups acquire power, how is it maintained? I was also concerned with the power which inheres in masculinity and femininity and the gender dynamics of power relations within the family. Second I needed ways of thinking about

the language I was recording on tape. What was being revealed through this language? I started with power as an understanding of issues about power seemed to be an important prerequisite before undertaking an analysis of research material.

Power

Marx began his analyses with the pre-supposition that the economic mode of production will determine power relations of society. This prioritises class over all other relations in society. Other writers following Marx have elaborated or modified his ideas. Althusser's conception of society as a 'complex structured whole articulated in dominance' helped to counter the reductionist tendencies of Marx. In Ideology and the Ideological State Apparatuses (1977) Althusser argues that the reproduction of the relations of production, which is central to the maintenance of power relations under capitalism, is secured by 'ideological state apparatuses' such as schools, the church, the family, the law, trade unions, etc. backed by the repressive systems of the police and the armed forces. Power is diffused and employed as is appropriate to each institution, but ultimately it rests on force.

Althusser like most other political theorists offers a version of history which attempts to explain relations and forces of power from his interpretation of the evidence. The French theorist Foucault is rather different because although he takes power relations to be an ever present feature of human societies he does not prescribe in advance what forms power will take in any particular society. Although he would acknowledge the importance of economic power relations, his concept of power is more diffuse. He says power is a relation. Foucault has produced detailed

historical analyses of the ways in which power is exercised and individuals are governed through psychiatry, the penal system and the production and control of sexuality. Analysis must look to the specific detail to uncover particular regimes of power and knowledge at work in a society and their part in the overall production and maintenance of existing power relations. Ways of constituting knowledge, together with social practices, forms of subjectivity and power relations which inhere in such knowledge Foucault has called 'Discourse' (Foucault 1981).

Foucault's method does not involve starting from a general theory of meaning and power, which will inevitably relate it to a universal signifier such as the phallus in psychoanalysis or the capital-labour relationship in Marxism, but from centres of power or knowledge like the female sexuality or the definitions of homosexuality. The questions to be asked of sexuality are centrally concerned with the diffuseness of power and the possibilities to challenge it.

In her analysis of the work of Foucault, Chris Weedon points to the necessity of understanding power in all its forms. Power is not simply derived from economic relations or from a group's potential for violent solutions (1). Therefore she suggests that explanations of patriarchy, for example, which seek to account for it only in terms of forms of power such as the capitalist mode of production, the nuclear family or male violence offer only partial analyses (Weedon 1987). Foucault suggests that power is not a one-way system as indeed do many other political theorists (Lukacs 1955, Habermas 1967). By this analysis there is always some power in the position as a woman, although it will be limited by the 'discourses' which constitute specific types of femininity. All female roles offer some possibilities of power.

Although Foucault's analyses liberate power from a simple binary relation it is apparent that in our society some people have greater access to knowledge and resources than others. Thompson (1984) points out that relations of power may still be described as "relations of domination" when one group has power to make choices and influence the lives of others while other groups are excluded. This power will usually include access to knowledge or resources which enables the possessor to have a more affluent and comfortable life.

"Relations of power are 'systematically asymmetrical' when particular agents or groups of agents are institutionally endowed with power in a way which excludes and to some significant degree remains inaccessible to, other agents or groups of agents, irrespective of the basis upon which such exclusion is carried out." (Thompson 1984).

Both Foucault and Thompson point out that subterfuge is an essential aspect of power. This was also a vital aspect of the ideas of Max Weber (1968 edition). Power relations are represented as legitimate and often as natural and almost unquestionable. This is clear when women's role in the family is considered. Women are supposed to be naturally inclined towards domesticity and motherhood and many social institutions help to ensure that this suggested natural inclination is maintained. When considering why women accept their female roles it is important to reflect on the other subject positions which are available to them.

In the analysis of conflict which underlies this research, the relative power of men and women is crucial. The ways in which decisions are made and conflicts are resolved reveals the interplay of power relations between the sexes. The negotiations between the amount of work and leisure and kinds of work which a spouse or partner might undertake are a measure of their power. Power may be negotiated within a relationship

but the evidence of the preceding chapter is that certain kinds of power accrue to men because they are men [Chapter 1].

Language

But how is this power reproduced and sustained? I was already alerted to the importance of language even before a detailed examination of my data, because on the tapes, in the transcripts, in my notes was language. Beginning to see how language related to the social reality it described seemed a necessary first step. This is a very large subject and I shall describe here only those aspects of language and power which influenced my decisions about the analysis of material.

Power relations are able to operate because they are considered legitimate. Weber observed that systems of domination work to build a belief in their legitimacy. This may include an attempt to present themselves as something other than what they really are. Thompson suggests that this presentation involves the mobilisation of language in the interests of the powerful. "Language is the area where actual and possible forms of social life and organisation are defined" (Thompson 1984).

Some of these issues have been discussed through the work of Saussure (1974 edition). He suggested a pre-given fixed structuring of language prior to its use in speech or writing. This implies that meaning is constituted within language, and is not guaranteed by the subject who speaks it. He theorised language as an abstract system consisting of chains of signs, in which the meaning of signs is not intrinsic but relational. Meaning is therefore produced within language rather than reflected by language.

This framework is premised on the distinction which Saussure made between 'langue' and 'parole': 'langue' is language considered as a system of values defined in terms of their internal and opposite relations and 'parole' is the individual and subjective realisation of 'langue' (Weedon 1987).

One problem with this simple duality is that it does not account for the plurality of meaning or changes in meaning. Problems arise in trying to explain why a word like 'woman' or 'child' might have conflicting meanings which change over time. There are a number of writers who have considered the work of Saussure and reformulated some aspects of it (Ricoeur 1981, Derrida 1973). Derrida suggests that there are no fixed signifiers. They have identity only in their difference from one another. The context of a word is always vital, and the temporary fixing of a meaning depends on the context. Therefore the meaning of the word 'baby' can vary from sex object (eg. Baby Love - I love you baby) to 'small child' according to its context.

Social meanings are produced within social institutions. Weedon suggests that language, in the form of an historically specific range of ways of giving meaning to social reality offers various images including modes of femininity and masculinity. She directs us to look at women's magazines as they offer a range of images of womanhood from career woman to mother to sex object. These are part of the influences on the way womanhood is lived in everyday life. They influence how men and women think about themselves and each other and help to structure relations to the lived reality. The media reinforces these images through verbal description, photographs and film. Other social agencies rely on assumptions about masculinity and femininity - assumptions about what is natural, appropriate, moral or good. The individual may not be aware that

they have a choice. Questions about the nature of femininity and masculinity have already been answered and there is tremendous social pressure for individuals to locate themselves within pre-existent modes of being female or being male. As we acquire language we are able to give voice to our experience and to understand it according to particular ways of conceptualising the world which pre-date our entry into language (Weedon op cit).

There has been a considerable debate within feminism about language itself. Some writers have considered present forms of language a masculine imposition which does not express female experience. One of the most radical writers along these lines is Irigaray (1974). She suggests that women are not allowed to speak.

"A language which presents itself as universal and which is in fact produced by men only, is this not what maintains the alienation and exploitation of women in and by society?" (Irigaray, p.62).

This view of the alienation of women from language and the male domination of language is prevalent in the work of other women linguists. Dale Spender suggests that women speak a male language

"It is perfectly feasible to suggest that women have been obliged to use a language which is not of their own making... In this way women remain 'outsiders', borrowers of the language." (Spender 1980, p.12).

In her work she suggests that men control language and meaning and that women have been excluded from the process of determining meaning. She suggests that men encode in language their world view and the conviction that they are superior to women. The result is women's alienation and silence.

Dale Spender had based some of her ideas on the writing of the Ardeners. They used the terms 'dominant and muted' to describe oppression as a social model. Shirley Ardener (1975) drew on examples from anthropology and built on the work of Edward Ardener. They suggest that a dominant group may impose their language on other groups and this imposition may stop the less powerful groups from expressing their true interests.

"Groups dominated in this sense find it necessary to structure their world through the model (or models) of the dominant group... the (sub-dominant group) might be relatively more 'inarticulate' when expressing themselves through the idiom of the dominant group, and silent on matters of special concern to them for which no accommodation has been made." (S. Ardener 1975, p.xii).

These views of language from the work of Dale Spender and the Ardeners imply that women have a problem with language - that women's experiences are not documented - that women cannot talk to one another because they do not have the vocabulary to put their experiences into words.

Deborah Cameron, however, argues that the problem is not one of language but one of power.

"It is important to grasp the difference between saying on the one hand, that women lack the means to express their world view in language and are thus muted in society, and saying on the other hand that women are muted because the kind of language they use is unacceptable to them. To make the first assertion is to claim that women have a linguistic problem: to make the second assertion is to say that the problem is not one of language but one of power." (Cameron 1985, p.105).

As Cameron goes on to point out, there is evidence all around us that women can express their interests, their thoughts, patriarchy can be criticised and undermined through language or the use of words. However there may be problems about getting issues on political agendas or having the power to implement women's demands.

This indicates a prior problem in the use of the word 'language'. It is not a precise term. It means the use of words but also the meaning conveyed by words. It means the grammar, the spoken word and the written word. It is unconvincing to argue, as Dale Spender does, that women have an inadequate access to language; it is more convincing to suggest that women have inadequate access to the bases of power. Language is the means of imposing a structure on experience and the structure reflects power relations between the sexes. However, even having rejected some of the above theories of language, I listened to the tapes of women talking with great care to consider and reconsider the issues that they raised.

Consequently this debate about language and silence became increasingly important to me when analysing the audio tape recordings. When women spoke to me were they using an alien language? Were they unable to express their needs and desires? And what was the meaning of silence? Silence about certain subjects, an unwillingness to discuss certain topics. Male and female language was different. That brought me to issues about the construction of gender.

The Nature of Masculinity and Femininity

This is seen most clearly in the struggle over the true nature of femininity and masculinity. There is a widespread belief that there is a natural way for males and females to behave. This belief is an organising principle running through upbringing and education.

These modes of behaviour may change over time and at the moment styles of masculinity are more varied than in the past. Men can involve themselves in previously female spheres such as childcare and domesticity without risking censure and also without losing other benefits which accrue

to men by virtue of being male (see Chapter One). These changes in possible masculine behaviour have been used to indicate greater equality in the family. The problem for this analysis was to understand how women end up staying at home with children, leading very different lives from men despite these changes. How are these differences justified? How is the continuing inequality between men and women justified? How do relations of domination work in everyday life?

The Family

The answer to some of these questions implies an investigation of power relations in the family. These have been understood as part of a God-given order which guarantees the sexual division of labour within the family. The naturalness of women's responsibility for domestic labour is balanced by the naturalness of men's involvement in work and politics. Both partners are equal but different. This view of equality denies a reality whereby relations between the sexes are structurally unequal. Recent changes in possible modes of masculine behaviour especially in regard to fatherhood mean that men have greater access to the previously female world of childcare. However the continuing association between women and domesticity may restrict most women's access to male spheres of power in the world (see Chapter One).

It would appear that women choose to live out their lives as women, wives and mothers with the accompanying restrictions. However men and women are both parents and yet only women are systematically excluded from work and spheres of influence because they have children. If as a woman I choose to have children do I also inevitably consent to my oppression?

The family is a meeting place for women and men both personal and private. However despite its personal nature, the assumptions which organise the division of labour in the family underlie all other aspects of the power imbalance between women and men.

This positioning of the family at the intersection between the individual and society means that the family is viewed as both universal and personal. This is not to suggest that our form of family is 'natural' or inevitable. The relationship between biology and culture can be managed in a variety of ways. As I suggested in Chapter One our society prioritises the nuclear family as the natural and inevitable unit but it is neither natural nor inevitable, as innumerable examples of alternative cultures reveal.

Morgan writes about the family as the 'mediator' between the individual and society because it relates both to the 'personal sphere' and to the 'institutional' sphere. He suggests that this is a useful analysis of the family life as long as it is realised that no aspect of family life is fixed. Every aspect - marriage, childhood, motherhood, fatherhood - has a history and is constantly shifting (Morgan 1984).

The suggestion that no family form is 'natural' or 'inevitable' implies that it is a social construct. This means that what the family is, who is included as a family member, how issues about childcare, upbringing and sexuality are handled vary between societies depending on their history, culture and economy. Morgan suggests that the study of the family should be:

"A phenomenological project, although one which is informed by historical and structural analysis and which has critical consequences." (Morgan, p.292).

To regard the study of the family as a 'phenomenological project' demands initially an understanding of the word 'phenomenological'. A wide spectrum of authors have called their work 'phenomenological'. The term dates back to Husserl but was most influentially employed in the social sciences by Schutz (1972 edition). His work was concerned with describing phenomena in the world which came to mean a description of the 'natural attitude' in everyday life or as Schutz sometimes called it 'the common sense world'. The goal of social science according to Schutz is to provide "the greatest possible clarification of what is thought about the social world by those living in it". (Schutz, p.220).

The weakness of a phenomenological approach to the family is that the concentration upon the accomplishment of everyday life fails to recognise the centrality of power in everyday life. Giddens points out that every relationship involves power.

"Even a transient conversation between two persons is a relation of power to which the participants may bring unequal resources. The production of an 'orderly' or accountable social world cannot merely be understood as collaborative work carried out by peers." (Giddens 1976, p.53) (author's emphasis).

Although Morgan wants to inform his phenomenological study of the family by a recourse to historical and structural analysis, this is undoubtedly no longer 'phenomenology' as understood by Schutz.

This brought me again to the problem of how relations in family life could be analysed to reveal the underlying bases of power. As I have already suggested such relations are represented as normal, legitimate and unquestioned. This thesis seeks to examine the language with which men and women describe their lives to see how subterfuge and deception might work through language in everyday life. I will also discuss conflicts and

contradictions especially in women's lives to see how these are resolved for the maintenance of underlying relations of domination.

This Study

Members of this community have opted for family life. They could have made other choices but the family is so massively supported and protected in this society it appears to be unquestionably natural in its present form. This naturalness relies heavily on dissimulation. As Thompson explains:

"Relations of domination which serve the interests of some at the expense of others may be concealed, denied or blocked in various ways and these ways - often overlapping, seldom intentional - may conceal themselves by their very efficacy presenting themselves as something other than what they are." (Thompson 1984, p.131).

In this study I intend to look at the ways in which power relations might reveal themselves for what they really are. For this reason I shall look at the points of conflict in the lives of women to see how conflicts and contradictions are resolved within the family. This should reveal the process by which women are constantly reinforced in their decision to be mothers once that commitment has emerged in the form of a child.

If Foucault and Thompson (op cit) are correct power relations are disguised through subterfuge. I intend therefore to look at the ways in which people justify their lives especially to concentrate on any discussions about equality to understand who it is who talks about equality and whether this reflects a reality in the lives of the family. If not whose purposes are served by discussions about equality?

Theories of Class

I have described this study as focusing on a 'middle class' community. I shall elucidate here on some definitions of class which guided this assessment. This begins with a discussion of concepts of class which have been used in sociological analysis and a consideration of theories of the new middle class - the people amongst whom this study is situated.

The idea of class has been a cornerstone of sociological analysis at the level of theory and for empirical studies. Marx was the first theorist to relate class to modes of production in a specific way.

The New Middle Class

The new middle class has created problems for a Marxist analysis because, according to the original theory, the middle class would fall into the proletariat as capitalism became increasingly exploitative in its later stages. This would serve to reinforce the conflict between the two major classes. This has not happened. Instead the middle class has expanded with the growth of service and administrative sectors of society. Later analyses have attempted to re-categorise the two class models, although clearly the capitalist dynamic did not follow the route Marx predicted.

The re-categorisation of the class model to incorporate the growing middle class has taken many forms. Giddens (1971) has sketched an abstract model in which he suggests that the middle classes are the possessors of educational and technical qualifications as opposed to the upper classes who own the means of production and the working classes who work through manual labour power. He further suggests that the middle class is

subdivided by educational qualifications, consumption patterns and location in the technical division of labour.

Recent neo-Marxist analyses of class stress the importance of ideological factors in the identification of class position. Poulantzas (1973) describes the economic, political and ideological criteria which determine objective class positions. The new middle class is the new 'petty bourgeoisie'. His decisions about class position continue to be based on relationship to the struggle between capital and labour. This means that the new bourgeoisie (white collar employees, technicians, supervisors, civil servants) are placed with the traditional bourgeoisie. Poulantzas, like other writers influenced by Althusser, follows Marxist assumptions about fundamental class relations in a capitalist mode of production.

Although this brief overview may give the impression that there are deep disagreements among theorists over the allocation of class positions, still one factor emerges as an inevitable aspect of that allocation - namely the importance of occupation. Despite constant criticism about the shortcomings of such an approach most theoretical positions in the social sciences continue to use occupation as an indicator of social class and it is a fundamental aspect of empirical research.

In order to clarify the class position of the people in this study it is possible to indicate a number of reference points. They fall within the Registrar General's social class codes I or II, that is either professional or intermediate occupations (by male occupation). Beyond this they are also home owners and are the possessors of considerable 'cultural capital' in the form of education usually to a high level. Writers such as Bourdieu (1974 & 1977), have escaped narrow definitions of class through the idea of 'cultural capital' and in fairness many of the preceding analysts of class

discussed above have also made that idea an essential part of their analytic schemes.

The above theorists are concerned with the new middle class and its specific location in the class structure. All are concerned with the boundaries between the classes and how they are to be drawn. Even those writers including 'ideological' as opposed to purely economic criteria end up with a classification based largely on male occupations in which the role of women is undifferentiated or unclear or assumed to be compatible or indistinguishable from the role of men. In past and recent debates about class, Sheila Allen has pointed out that women are treated as marginal.

"Mainstream analyses of the class structure have been impervious to one of the major divisions of labour, that between men and women in respect of the rearing of children and the servicing of members of households." (Allen in Giddens and McKenzie 1982).

In many analyses of class women derive their class status from men. Goldthorpe (1987) justified this in the Oxford Mobility Studies because he argued that the class position of women depended on their husbands. He argued that class was principally concerned with families, and the husband/father's occupation formed the link between the family and the outside world. This issue has been the subject of much debate in the journal 'Sociology'. A recent article states:

"Almost all empirical studies of class have been developed in relation to occupation factors or factors associated with occupation and have been concerned with men." (Dale et al 1985).

Women employed outside the home can be incorporated into a theoretical framework based on occupation, as Dale et al suggest. They also point to the shortcomings of such a framework.

"A second dimension relating to style of life as reflected by consumption of goods, services and property must also be included and considered. Class position on this second dimension can only be allocated to family units as a whole. For those who are not involved directly in the labour market, occupation is not an appropriate basis for the allocation of class position." (Dale et al, op cit,p.398).

For a definition of the new middle class which relates to both women and men it is possible to turn to Bernstein (1977) who draws a distinction between the new and the old middle class. The old middle class has a direct relationship with capital which it continues to own or control. The new middle class has an indirect relationship to the means of production but a direct relationship to the means and forms of cultural reproduction. For Bernstein the ideology of this group is based upon the concept of the person. Middle class socialisation can lead to what Bernstein calls 'ambiguous personal identity' and greater flexibility for individual adaptation. In this idea of class, the emphasis on socialisation places the mother as a crucial element of cultural reproduction. Because she is recognised as essential in the transmission of values, her presence in the home is demanded and expected. As Bernstein points out, other factors point her away from the family - her education and occupation - and this is a source of tension and conflict. This view of class captures both the liberal dilemmas which face the community in this study and the conflicts which middle class women face in fulfilling their maternal role.

This study is not centrally concerned with the development of a model of class which would reflect the position of women in relation to the family. Some of the material will reflect upon the costs and benefits to women in accepting their positions as transmitters of middle class culture. Bernstein points to tensions for women which are the central issues of this study. These tensions emerge in this study as conflicts and contradictions. Many of these stem from the differences in the lives of

men and women and the different kinds of support necessary to maintain different roles.

The People

The people I wanted to study were people who lived as I had lived - the middle class families with young children who usually had a traditional division of labour with the husband at work and the wife at home. I also wanted to investigate parenthood in single parent families and parenthood in families where the wife is in paid work, as a contrast to my traditional group. Because the research was conducted over six years some families broke up and some women went back to work from my original group. The initial problem was how to select the research families and to convince them to participate.

There is an area of a small university city in the south of England which I will call 'The Denton Estate'. I lived nearby and my child was in a nursery on this estate. It is an area of old Victorian and Edwardian houses occupied by middle and upper middle class families. I decided to recruit my 20 traditional families from this estate because it formed a community which was very distinct with its own schools and facilities. I approached parents of children at the nursery and out of 22 families ten agreed to an interview. I gained another five families by asking all ten if they knew of people who might take part in this study and lived on the Denton Estate. In this way I ended up with 15 families for an initial interview. In all these families the mother was at home and the father in paid work. Through the nursery I also met five families where the mother was in paid work. It then remained to find five families where the parents lived apart. I found four single parent mothers from the school playground where my daughter was at school. They all lived on the Denton Estate or very close by. I therefore stopped at this number - 24 families. These were all middle class people.

I decided that this variety was appropriate because I wanted to look at traditional family life and consider if working mothers and single parent mothers would explain and justify their lives differently; if their husbands and ex-husbands felt a different commitment to fatherhood. This, I believed, would help me to reflect upon the material from the families who were organising along traditional lines with the mother at home and the father in paid work. Obviously the lifestyle of these families might change if these women return to paid work but for the period that they are at home these women are often totally dependent on their husbands. Furthermore this break in the employment cycle will affect these women, possibly all their lives.

In each case both partners were to be interviewed if possible. Most interview work was carried out through tape recording. Some were a result of detailed notes. I also undertook some participant observation which was recorded in the form of notes, always assembled after the event.

The initial 24 couples were all subject to interviews and detailed conversation. The initial interviews were largely unstructured, although I wanted to gain some basic information. I therefore had a list of areas to cover rather than an interview schedule.

From all people interviewed I wanted to know their work history and some aspects of their parents' work and lives. I wanted to discuss their experiences in their parents' family and their current family and lifestyle. I wanted to know how the division of labour was organised and what was included in being a wife and mother, a husband and a father.

Beyond this I wanted to understand how people justified their lives and what inequalities and conflicts they were prepared to tolerate. This material was not necessarily available through an interview. For this reason I spent long periods in conversation with members of the Denton

Estate community - inevitably this was especially with the women. It was undeniably easier for me to gain access to the lives of women rather than the lives of men. With men, once outside the interview situation discussion became problematic because they were largely not available during the day. The occasions when I met the men from the Denton Estate was at PTA meetings or CND meetings. Then a conversation, in any depth, about family life or fatherhood was often inappropriate. Women accepted and responded to my queries about motherhood more spontaneously, because that does form a large amount of women's interaction at various stages of their lives. They knew that I was a mother, and often knew my children, and the conversations I held with women were part of the flow of life. My conversations with men were more problematic. They had to be arranged and programmed into their day. Sexuality is often an issue. Singling out certain men for attention could have been misconstrued on some occasions. When I did talk to men in interview situations, they struggled to answer questions honestly but they were occasionally at a loss to know why I wanted the information. For example Malcolm found it difficult to discuss his parents.

Q. What was your father's job?

M. Accountant.

Q. And your mother's?

M. Don't know.

Q. Didn't your mother have any paid work?

M. M'm she worked for the BBC I think. Look I can't see what this has to do with me being a father. Do you really need to know all this?

Because I was interested in points of contradiction and conflict and their justification and rationalisation I was able to collect information from

everyday settings. I spent a considerable amount of time in situations where I could engage with my research families especially those from the Denton Estate and I both joined the Labour Party on the estate and was elected to the PTA of a school serving the estate. Furthermore I contrived to get invitations to as many events as possible on the Denton Estate to establish the nature of family life. I lived on the outskirts of this community for eight years and for three years I carried on a dialogue with families and individuals within that community.

After the initial period of interviewing and observation certain issues had been formulated. Being a wife and mother clearly entailed a certain sacrifice. It often meant stifling aspirations for jobs and employment and renouncing personal ambition for the foreseeable future. However, being a father and husband meant quite the opposite. The paid job was very important as the sole income for many of these families and was the major source of identity for most men. But domestic demands were also quite heavy. Maintaining this lifestyle, I felt, involved a level of denial from each partner. I wanted to investigate the way women blocked their ambitions and the ways in which men concealed from themselves the benefits that masculinity entails, but more specifically to get to know the details of their lives and possibly their explanations through conversations. In this I was looking to understand the conflicts in people's lives. This is now written up as the bulk of the research.

I then concentrated on material from eight families who seemed most willing to undertake a further interview to discuss some of the 'Special Topics' which I considered needed greater investigation (Chapter 8). I have also included four case studies of divorce, which show, retrospectively some of the reasons for divorce. In each case the women have become aware that motherhood is not everything they want from life.

The conflicts become impossible to accommodate. Two of these marriages broke up during the period of this study and I have written about some of the explanations which women and men have given at the time and later.

The people in this study form a natural group. They all know each other and are part of a small community. The study is a picture of middle class family life which cannot be generalised to all family life, it or even to all middle class family life. However, there is no reason to believe that this group is very unusual.

Part of the underlying reason for this research is to argue that there will be aspects of life amongst these families which will reflect the wider attitudes of society because economically and culturally this community is part of the wider society. Ideas about parenthood have been formed as part of a dialogue with currently available modes of motherhood or fatherhood. This research suggests further lines of research which will form part of the conclusion.

The Process of Research

I began to study 'progressive' fatherhood after being convinced that research about men and their motives was as important as research about women. As the work progressed, the thesis took form around parenthood and family life. This shift occurred when I realised that the organisation of fatherhood was only possible in the context of present arrangements about motherhood. It proved impossible to talk to men (or to men and women) about fatherhood. I also had to talk to both about motherhood. The two are inter-related.

My first task was to embark upon a long process of reading the literature in a systematic but inconclusive way. I was searching for some

way to begin the research and for some initial questions to become obvious. With the benefit of hindsight I now realise that some of the research questions were already a part of my thought and had been for many years. They had emerged from my political commitment to the women's movement and from my experiences as a daughter, a wife, and a mother. These commitments became clear as the work proceeded but at that point I was unaware of the power of my personal knowledge. This knowledge was not mine alone. It was shared with a significant number of other women and articulated within the women's movement. But at that point I was in the grip of "interactionism". I had undergone a long initiation into ethnography. I had spent the previous two years doing case study research in schools working with people totally committed to the interactionist model of research. Grounded Theory - the idea that theory must emerge from the data - was a central tenet of the research method (Glaser and Strauss 1967). I came to question and doubt its validity as the research went on. After a year of reading I refused to flounder any longer and went out into the community with my tape recorder, note pad and pencil, as was appropriate, and began the study. I had no well formulated questions, simply a commitment to look at parenthood and fatherhood in particular. My adherence to Grounded Theory at that time gave me the confidence to begin work, assured that something would emerge, although as I shall explain this belief in Grounded Theory did not survive the experience in the field.

My research issues after the first few months in the field were extremely practical and were concerned with the division of labour I saw around me. I asked myself:

Given the move to companionate and egalitarian marriage -

a. how does this reveal itself in the organisation of family life?

- b. how much housework and childcare do progressive fathers actually undertake?
- c. how do their wives feel about this?
- d. how do single parent mothers manage without the support of a husband?

I went through a middle period when I began to see that the simplicity of these questions was inadequate given the complexity of the material which was being collected. The questions I was asking myself and of the material at this time reflected my acknowledgement of the contradictions within family life.

- a. what are the constraints and contradictions in parenthood?
- b. are these contradictions resolved in ways which oppress women?
- c. how do women resist? how do they conform?
- d. how do men and women justify and explain this situation?
- e. are there differences between those women in paid employment and those at home?
- f. what are the experiences of single parent mothers/fathers?

Finally I came to a concern with the use of language as a central theme of the work. The questions allow a greater depth of interpretation from the material.

- a. where does the language of equality come from?
- b. whose interests does it serve?
- c. who speaks it?

All these questions are reflected in the final work in some ways.

The interviews, plus three years of observation and recording events and conversations provides the bulk of the material which I analysed. I also found situations to return and ask more questions after the interviews had been recorded. The school playground provided me with opportunities to

chat informally with women and many of the issues which we had discussed would spontaneously arise as on-going problems in their lives. Stressful relations with husbands rarely became overt, unless a marriage broke up, when they would be discussed in detail. However, problems with children and childcare, part-time jobs, health problems, 'feeling low', all these subjects could be touched upon in the playground.

I also developed some friendships with women, asked them to lunch or for tea after school in order to chat and thereby get a different quality of material from anything that can be gathered in an interview situation. The line between researcher and friend was blurred and thus was not a one-way process. I want to return to this problem later in this chapter.

Although a belief in Grounded Theory gave me the confidence to begin the work, in retrospect I can see that theory emerging from the data was only one aspect of the development of my ideas. I was also reading widely and this led to major shifts in my analysis over time. It was finally my understanding that marriage embodies power relations between the sexes which encouraged me to consider conflicts and contradictions as ways of understanding power relations in the family. This understanding came partly from observing the breakdown of some of these marriages and partly from reading political and theoretical work. In the next section I want to look more closely at the research method I used and some of the problems encountered in fieldwork.

Research Method - Ethnography

My commitment is to the interpretive tradition of sociological research and specifically what has come to be called ethnography.

Hammersley and Atkinson discuss this method explaining that it draws on the ways in which people make sense of their lives.

"In many respects ethnography is the most basic form of social research. Not only does it have a very long history (Wax 1971) but it also, bears a close resemblance to the routine ways in which people make sense of the world in everyday life." (Hammersley and Atkinson 1983, p.2).

In his discussion of interpretive sociology Giddens points to the roots of such methods in the German hermeneutic tradition, the phenomenology tradition of Schutz and the 'ordinary language philosophy' of Austin (Giddens 1976, p.24). He points to the ways in which all three rely on 'verstehen' or understanding as the way of making sense of human society, and draws out the wider implications.

"... verstehen should be treated not as a technique of investigation peculiar to the social scientists, but as generic to all social interaction as such..." (Giddens 1976, p.52).

As soon as 'understanding' becomes the method by which we make sense of social reality then interpretation and critiques of interpretation become of fundamental importance. 'Verstehen' takes us into descriptive study. Admittedly a double hermeneutic must be acknowledged. There is the understanding with which people make sense of their own lives and conduct and the lives of others, and there is in turn the understanding of the researcher when making sense of their accounts.

The research method which I have adopted also has close links with the case study method which has a long history within sociology, going back to the Chicago School (2) and the case studies of the inner city. More recently, however, it has been used as a method in educational research (3) Such researchers as Helen Simons (1980) and Rob Walker (1986) have defended the case study method and its re-emergence in sociology has been documented

by J. Clyde Mitchell (1983) who makes a clear case for small scale research. This study is a case study in so far as the people are all members of a small middle class community and their lifestyle is examined and explored over a period of time.

Ethnographic method and more specifically case study methods also have close connections with anthropology. Schatzman and Strauss describe an anthropological approach to research within the researcher's own society.

"For the naturalistically-oriented humanist the choice of method is virtually a logical imperative. The researcher must get close to the people whom he (sic) studies; he understands that their actions are best comprehended on the spot in the natural, ongoing environment where they work and live." (Schatzman and Strauss 1973, p.5).

They suggest that if the researchers out in the field immerse themselves in the surrounding environment they will begin to understand how people make sense of their situation, and comprehend the 'symbolic sounds' which organise that part of the world.

They advocate pragmatism in regard to method with the researcher less concerned with "whether his techniques are 'scientific'" (p.8) but more concerned with "what specific operations might yield" (p.8).

As part of the research method they suggest observation, tape recording, note taking plus other techniques for gaining information.

They have a commitment to stand outside the situation being researched. Schatzman and Strauss make this clear.

"The researcher model we depict is substantially an outsider to the group, organisation or institutional system he wishes to study." (p.ix).

This distance means that the people studied can become objects of research from whom the researcher is cushioned, usually by an academic background

and lifestyle. This problem runs through the whole research process because it is relatively easy for a researcher to exploit the subjects of their research in some ways. Angela McRobbie looked back on research in the 1960s to comment on the ethics of such work.

"... we have all witnessed the way in which (often left) male sociologists have patronised their working class client populations. Often in the name of research they have pronounced highly romanticised even exoticised accounts, but depart the 'field' leaving behind them only confusion, distrust or straightforward bewilderment... We have, in short, accused them of flirting with working class culture from the comfort and safety of the university environment." (McRobbie 1982, p.51).

McRobbie suggests that power always potentially resides with the researcher and Walker also takes up this point. He suggests that "Research is highly intrusive in the lives of those who are its subjects" (1986). The power appears to reside with the researcher, who frames the questions, who holds all the relevant knowledge and who writes the final study through their own selective bias.

Although McRobbie and Walker both give evidence to suggest that the 'researched' are often exploited through academic research it is not true that they are absolutely powerless. Firstly they do not have to cooperate by answering questions truthfully, or answering them at all, if they do not want to (just as Malcolm refused to answer my questions about his family).

A great deal of research is concentrated in schools and much of this recent self examination by researchers refers to educational research. It may well be that ethnographic research is far less significant in the lives of most of the people we research than is sometimes suggested. This is certainly the case in schools where pupils frequently refuse to cooperate or take any notice whatsoever of researchers. Certainly the final products seem to have very little impact. There is hardly any evidence that policy

decisions made by the present Conservative Government are influenced by research although it may affect some aspects of detail. Although researchers should respect confidentiality it is not otherwise clear that research is quite as intrusive as some ethnographers might suggest.

However a further problem may present itself to researchers undertaking ethnographic research and this was summed up by Gans in his study of 'Levittown'. He points to the deceptions necessary to obtain valid material.

"If the researcher is completely honest with people about his activities, they will try to hide actions and attitudes they considered undesirable and so will be dishonest. Consequently the researcher must be dishonest to get honest data." (Gans, 1962, p.447).

Bell and Newby develop this even more forcefully.

"The bitter pill that fieldworkers have to swallow, and nobody should do fieldwork in a community unless they are prepared to swallow it, is that many social relationships have to be developed for instrumental reasons and that they will not always be understood as such by those with whom the fieldworker has to inter-relate in the community." (Bell and Newby 1974).

This dubious pragmatism was a problem in my own study. Just the asking of questions sometimes triggered an emotional response, and I as researcher had often to decide how much support to give to women in the study. The following incident was especially poignant. After I had interviewed one woman about her family life, she broke down telling me that she was very unhappy. I sympathised with her. Two days later she arrived on my doorstep with a suitcase and her two children, saying she had left her husband and had nowhere to go. I took her in and she stayed for a few days, but my house was small and she could not live with me permanently. She returned to her home and husband and she said life had improved. I always felt that I had let her down by not supporting her to get

established on her own. Also I admit that it crossed my mind to get out the tape recorder while she was trying to tell me her problems.

More generally I was often forced to behave in ways which were pragmatic, seeking relationships which would enable me to gain access to people's stories about their lives. This pragmatism I justified by my own commitment to giving women a voice. However it is true that these people's lives and words provided me with research material and in that sense it is exploitative. When Barbara Dubois (1983) suggests that in feminist research the 'knower and known' should be of the same universe, it is difficult to appreciate what this might mean in reality. I use the experiences and language of people around me in an analysis of social life which many of these people would not share. Although I returned interview transcripts, I have not negotiated my analysis with the people in my study, first because there are too many people involved, and second because the analysis is the part of the work which is most intensely my own.

If I were committed to action research I would feed back my ideas into the community to generate change. This seems in my case such a mammoth undertaking that the prospect overwhelms me. In the case of individual families, I feel my analysis could be disruptive of the delicate facades which make married life possible, and although desiring a social revolution I could not take the responsibility for disrupting the lives of women around me unless I was prepared to give them the support which I know is needed to withstand such upheaval. Alternatively my analysis may leave them unmoved. Either way I would find the process difficult. As the 'knower' I am partially in the same universe as the 'known', but I have subjected their lives to critical scrutiny. However in relation to friends and neighbours there is always an element of exploitation which cannot be

denied. The power rarely shifts from the researcher unless the 'researched' are small enough in number to engage in a genuine dialogue. This remains the case despite the fact that this group are middle class and the men especially are hardly powerless in other contexts.

I could not, therefore, honestly claim to have executed a non-exploitative piece of work, but I would suggest that some exploitation is an inevitable aspect of research, and that both the process and the final study may well be misunderstood or disliked by the people who took part. I believe that anybody who wishes to explore political issues through research must be prepared to face up to this possibility.

Analysing and Selecting Data for Presentation

As the collection of material proceeded two themes emerged. First for women, it was the overpowering nature of motherhood and the ways in which some middle class women in traditional marriages could not even articulate any sense of irritation or ambivalence while they were married. However as some marriages disintegrated, discontents surfaced. Other women who could discuss contradictions in their lives were often ones who made an early return to paid employment. Second, for the husbands, the dominance of career and the willingness to justify using their wives as a domestic servicing unit became a major theme. These themes were related to two theoretical concerns: first the experience and significance of gender in the organisation of domestic division of labour; and second an understanding of how ideology works to suppress ambivalence and desire for attainments other than motherhood in both women and men.

In taking areas of contradictions as a central theme, I was able to select material which bore upon this from transcripts of interviews,

conversations and observation notes. In deciding on major themes from the material:

1. I made case notes on each family.
2. I indexed the themes which arose across the interviews and case material. These themes were 'Why have children?', 'Anxiety and guilt', 'Paid work and domestic life', 'How to be a mother/father - what it includes practically and emotionally - family finance - division of labour - justification and denial'.

I then scanned the data to illustrate these themes and discuss how women and men structure their lives. I chose to re-interview eight families because these seemed to reflect normality, and I documented the arrangement of life in these families in a detailed way. This forms the bulk of the material in 'Special topics'. I also wrote case studies of the divorce of any of my research families as well as interviewing some single parents. I judged that this would illuminate some of the issues which women had been unable to discuss at earlier periods of their lives, and indeed irritation and anger surfaced which other 'happily married women' managed to repress.

Having accumulated a considerable amount of material I decided to concentrate on the conflicts which women and men experience in their lives and how these conflicts are resolved. As every interview with women and most with men revealed conflict and contradiction, this simplified the problems of analysis.

I therefore looked at all the material on motherhood (for example), sorted it into categories and looked within the categories to see what conflicts emerged and how they were resolved. As all the women I talked to experienced anxieties about returning to work, bringing up children and

sorting out relationships with their husbands. Not all these conflicts are of the same kind but I wanted to see how they were resolved given the idea of domestic equality.

In considering contradictions I searched for insights for the stories about the past and present, looked for claims of reasoning and explanation behind which the oppression of women, especially mothers might emerge. The themes I finally pursued were relevant to both mothers and fathers with some slight adaptations. I looked at both motherhood and fatherhood to see why they said they had children, what the job involves, what was relationships between the spouses and how life is organised in practical terms.

Notes

1. This is a rather different idea of power from that implied in other sociological work. For example Weber considers power in terms of legitimacy. See Giddens, A. 1971.
2. Studies of Chicago from 1920 to 1950 from the Department of Sociology, University of Chicago.
3. It has been widely used in the Centre for Applied Research in Education in University of East Anglia under the supervision of Lawrence Stenhouse.

Table of Characteristics of Some Members of the Middle Class Community of the Denton Estate - Mothers at Home

<u>Couple</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Children</u>	<u>Pol- itics</u>	<u>Present/ Previous Job</u>	<u>Education</u>	<u>Parents' Occupation</u>	<u>Reason for move to Denton Estate</u>
Jenny Alex	35 35	Katrina 9 Esme 5 Jason 2	Lab Lab	Housewife/ Teacher Lecturer	College Univ.	M Housewife F Surveyor M Housewife F Teacher	Both students here
Hazel Harry	38 38	Rebecca 12 Jane 4	SDP SDP	Housewife/ Social worker Art Historian	Univ. Univ.	M Doctor F Lecturer M Housewife F Lecturer	His job
Janet Jeffrey	35	Denise 8 Kelly 4 Kate 4	Lab Lab	Housewife/ Teacher Lecturer/ Teacher	College College	M Housewife F Businessman M Housewife F Railway worker	His job
Anna Malcolm	34 38	Lois 8 Esther 4	SDP SDP	Housewife/ Teacher Solicitor	Univ. Univ.	M Doctor F Doctor M Housewife F Accountant	His job
Kate Gerald	34 36	David 5 Mary 3 Sally 2 Susan 1	Lab Lab	Housewife/ Musician Teacher	Univ. Univ.	M Housewife F Banker M Teacher (piano) F Teacher	His job
Peggy Dennis	39 40	Ben 10 Simon 8 Ian 3	Lab Lab	Housewife/ Research Assistant Lecturer	Univ. Univ.	M) Run a F) shop M Teacher F Unemployed	Both student. here
Teresa Matthew	34 36	Ellen 8 Paul 6 Peter 4	SDP SDP	Housewife/ Teacher Lecturer	Univ. Univ.	M Housewife F Architect M Housewife F Travel agent	His job

<u>Couple</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Children</u>	<u>Pol- itics</u>	<u>Present/ Previous Job</u>	<u>Education</u>	<u>Parents' Occupation</u>	<u>Reason for move to Denton Estate</u>
Rachel Michael	36 36	Alex 8 Betsy 4 Jamie 2	Lab Lab	Housewife/ Teacher Teacher	Univ. Univ.	M Housewife F Salesman M Housewife F Civil Servant	His job
Diane Peter	32 36	Rachel 8 Linsay 6	SDP SDP	Housewife/ Window Dresser Decorator	College College	M Housewife F Decorator M Shop Asst. F Electrician	Home town
Meg Ralph	40 42	Claire 12 Patrick 10 Joanna 8	Lab Lab	Housewife/ Chemist Teacher	Univ. Univ.	M Housewife F Farmer M Housewife F Vicar	His job
Barbara George	34 36	Sian 8 Gavin 6 Gareth 4 Bronwyn 2	SDP SDP	Housewife/ Secretary Army Instructor	College College	M Housewife F Customs Officer M Housewife F Army	His job
Helen Simon	38 42	Riannan 8 Arwyn 6	Lab Lab	Housewife/ Teacher Lecturer	Univ. Univ.	M Doctor F Solicitor M Hairdresser F Hairdresser	His job
Brigit Alasdair	38 40	Alex 8 Alan 4	Lab Lab	Child- minder/ Teacher Lecturer	Univ. Univ.	M Housewife F Policeman M Housewife F Lecturer	His job
Fiona Allan	30 39	Sadie 7 Sally 4	Lab Lab	Housewife/ Lecturer Teacher	College Univ.	M Housewife F Writer M Housewife F Publisher	His job
Mary Julian	36 40	Juliette 6 David 2	Lab Lab	Housewife/ Teacher Editor	College Univ.	M Housewife F Deceased M Doctor F Doctor	His job

<u>Couple</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Children</u>	<u>Pol- itics</u>	<u>Present/ Previous Job</u>	<u>Education</u>	<u>Parents' Occupation</u>	<u>Reason for move to Denton Estate</u>
Liz	34	Peter 7 Simon 5	Lab	Librarian	College	M) Run a F) pub	Joint decision
Frank	36		Lab	Potter	College	M Housewife F Civil servant	
Maria	34	Karen 9 Tim 5	SDP	PT Teacher/ Teacher	College	M Housewife F Salesman	Home town
Martin	36		SDP	Deputy Head	College	M Housewife F Car mechanic	
Rose	30	Tristan 8 Jonathan 4	Lab	Supply Teacher/ Teacher	College	M) Factory F) workers	His job
Chris	32			Civil Engineer	College	M) Fish & F) shop	
Carole	34	Amy 6 Edward 5	Lab	Masseuse/ Art Teacher	Art School	M Housewife F Plumber	His job
Raymond	35		Lab	Public Relations	College	M Housewife F Manager	
Jo	34	Tom 6 Sam 3	SDP	Teacher/ Teacher	Univ.	M Secretary F Salesman	Home town
Barry	35		Con	Antique dealer	College	M Housewife F Businessman	

Table of Characteristics of Some Members of the Middle Class Community of the Denton Estate - Single Parents

<u>Couple</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Children</u>	<u>Pol- itics</u>	<u>Present/ Previous Job</u>	<u>Education</u>	<u>Parents' Occupation</u>	<u>Reason for move to Denton Estate</u>
Tess	34	Alice 7	Lab	Teacher/ Housewife	Univ.	M Housewife F Teacher	His job
Neil	36	Ben 12	SDP	Lecturer	Univ.	M Housewife F Estate agent	
Brenda	34		Lab	Social worker	Univ.	M Solicitor F Doctor	His job
Max	38	Esther 14 Ellie 7	Lab	Lecturer	Univ.	M Musician F Musician	
Ellen	36	Ian 12 Peter 14	Lab	Teacher/ Housewife	Teacher Training	M Housewife F RAF	His job
John	38		Con	Insurance broker	Left school at 16	M F	
Sandra		Alex 12	Lab	Teacher/ Housewife	Univ.	M Housewife F Businessman	
Paul		Amy 8	Lab	Teacher	Univ.	M Housewife F Civil Servant	

CHAPTER 4

INTRODUCTION TO THE RESEARCH MATERIAL

My Perspectives as I Began the Study of This Community

This section aims to situate the study in a geographical and ethnographical context. This material is drawn from notes and observations made during the first three years of the study. As much as describing the Denton Estate it undoubtedly reflects some of the early perspectives which I brought to the work. These perspectives were mediated through experiences in my own life which produced certain views of the Denton Estate where I was also a resident.

I am no longer a resident of the [Denton] Estate and it is not possible for me, from a position of seven years after the beginning of the study, to judge what is my interpretation of the truth rigorously against any objective standard. However, from my continuing knowledge of friends and events on the [Denton] Estate most of this material still seems a valid description of the lifestyle of a certain section of the community. Although this section may be judged impressionistic rather than resting on evidence, other residents of the estate who have read it, expressed agreement with most of the description.

The area

This study took place in the South of England. There are a number of middle class communities in the city but the area close to the river which I am calling the Denton Estate is the subject of this study. It is a collection of nine or ten residential roads and its name (my Denton) comes from the widest road which runs through the centre. It is an area with

distinct boundaries: at one end of the estate is the river and an expanse of common land. The other two boundaries are main roads. It is possible that this relative isolation surrounded by fields and the river intensifies the middle class lifestyle because the Denton Estate is a distinct community. I shall describe some of the general features of this middle class community giving some indication of political orientations and the social life of the area.

Although not all built at the same time, the houses are mainly Victorian and Edwardian semi-detached or terraces. The houses are long and narrow with a variety of decoration depending on the builders. Some of the streets are lined with trees. Richmond Avenue has the original limes. Not all of these roads are exactly the same. Bennett Road is quiet, with a number of old people still living in their houses. Bennett also has a sprinkling of bungalows and one or two modern houses. Richmond Avenue seems to enjoy the most community spirit, with children going to play from house to house. Denton Avenue is the most expensive with a large number of detached houses and expansive gardens. Forsythe Road has a reputation for being cosmopolitan, and is rather run down. Wallis Avenue and Brendon Road are staid, more private - on the outskirts of the area. There are areas near the Denton Estate which have also been colonised by the ethos of the area, across the main road into Harold Road. Middle class buyers take over what were originally artisan homes and house prices rise. As in many other areas checking on house prices in the area is a local shared hobby. People will wander around houses for sale in the area, with no intention of buying but an interest in other people's decor and the intention of establishing how much money their own houses are worth.

The houses which are sold are in demand from middle class buyers a few of whom work at the nearby university. It is probably the proximity to the university which gives the area an identity and a sense of community. There is quite a variety of inhabitants but the feeling of the area is that it is dominated by middle class values and lifestyle. This sense of community does not derive from knowing everybody who lives in the area but from finding a selection of like-minded people, or those in a similar stage of family development, and knowing about many other inhabitants by repute or gossip. Those people who are not part of the middle class community probably number half the inhabitants, but they are blocked out from the consciousness of those people who have a sense of a life spent together with other similar middle class families. There are undoubtedly a variety of sub-cultures, but the one which revolves around middle class family life is the one on which I concentrated. The total number of residents in the estate is about 1,500. Of these the middle class community number approximately 750 people including children.

This is a distinct lifestyle. People who want to belong to this middle class community move into the area and either adopt or maintain the intense form of family life which characterises and is reinforced by the other members of the middle class. This exists, therefore, as a supportive group of people who reinforce one another's values and ideas and lifestyle.

To the middle class the other inhabitants are socially invisible (see Stacey's work in Banbury). The woman who works in the launderette, the woman who plays the piano in the pub, the woman whose front window looks like a gypsy caravan - they all live on the Denton Estate but are largely unknown to the middle class community. Some of these people are the relatives of the original owners of the house. They are the people for whom these houses were initially built. Their houses are different from

those converted by the new middle class buyers. They largely retain the original layout inside the house. They buy furniture in different stores - Courts rather than Habitat. Wallpaper rather than white-washed walls and patterns are evident in carpeting and furniture. These are not the people I met at the Labour Party nor at the babysitting meetings. As far as I know they do not form a community as such in the way middle class owners do.

Mr Mortlock, the decorator and one of the older house owners who lived in the area for 60 years described some of the houses he has decorated on the estate. He does not always favour middle class renovation:

"I've been in quite a few round here. I have my regulars and there's plenty of other work. Lots of folk knock walls down and build on the back. I put up what they tell me - don't always like it of course, but I don't say."

The houses themselves are of interest. From the outside the Victorian and Edwardian houses maintain their sense of mystery. Because they are long and narrow it is barely possible to glimpse the kitchen from the front door. Once inside, the houses of the people in this study are often quite similar: large Japanese lanterns, a central wall has often been removed for a large through living room, stripped pine chests of drawers, children's paintings in the kitchen. Everywhere the combination of extensive building work with faded chic, ethnic rugs and shabby furniture, rows of books and well-placed house plants, carefully chosen prints on the wall.

The lifestyle

The child-centred household which predominates among the middle class families means children take up a great deal of space within the houses.

The houses are reorganised to accommodate childhood activities and the full expression of the child-centred lifestyle which I shall describe in later sections.

One organising factor of this society is through knowing other families with children of similar age. There is a mass of nursery places in the area, mostly private places. There is a life which centres around young children. Mothers with push-chairs stop to chat at street corners, rather resembling old fashioned nannies - in this case the mother nanny who believes that the children must have 'the best'.

There are few single parent mothers, because property is expensive and they generally are a low income group. There are few working mothers with very young children in this area, because one reason for living on the Denton Estate is to become part of the middle class group where women stay at home with children. It is a community for couples. For this reason many women have three, four, even five children until they are into their forties. This prolongs their membership of the women's sub-culture which is comfortable and supportive and avoids the necessity for choices about new directions in life. For many of the women who are having babies over forty, childcare will go until the age of fifty.

Local schools

Once children go to school they are all taken into the local infants school which lies just outside the estate. The zoning arrangements for the school catchment area stop short at the nearby council estate. The school is therefore solidly middle class.

The headteacher is committed to high standards in reading, writing and number work. She said, "We have very intelligent children here and we aim

to do our best by them." On my visits to the school I saw a very structured environment. An ex-teacher from the infants school assured me that most parents were happy with the school. "It is popular. There is an apparent child-centred approach but underneath is a tightly controlled work ethic." This teacher left to work in a school with a more diverse intake of pupils. She says:

"I've swapped Emma and Jacob and Charlotte, for Cherry and Sharon and Gary and I like them a lot better. Ordinary kids. At my last school [on the Denton Estate] the parents wanted me to push their children towards university when they were only five years old!"

The local junior school seems to be less popular with parents. The headmaster is considered traditional and unbending, and some old-fashioned discipline is strongly in evidence combined with a drab approach to decor and classroom organisation. The support of parents from the Denton Estate is best described as variable. In the playground parents complained to me that the discipline was inappropriately strict for nine and ten year olds. Some teachers are 'dull and unexciting' and one mother complained that unnecessary sexism prevailed in the playground. The school adviser for the juniors explained to me that he felt the parents and the school to be out of sympathy.

"The parents want a different approach. The school is very traditional. I think there might be trouble there in the future."

The comprehensive school has a far wider intake than the Denton Estate and encompassed, the working class community to the north. The school copes with this variety of pupils by a system of setting after the first term. Most teenagers on the estate gain their 'O' levels and move on to sixth form college.

In all the schools the parent teacher associations seem to be dominated by the middle class people from the estate. During the period of this study the chairs of the PTA in the Infants and Junior Schools were both male academics. A visit I made to the Christmas Disco - a joint event for the Infants and Junior Schools - revealed that it remains the mothers' prerogative to cook and serve food on such occasions but the men are in charge on the door and behind the bar.

Local politics and local organisations

The overall politics of the area is SDP Liberal Alliance (early 1980s). This party has many local active campaigners with two councillors living in the Denton Estate and taking up local issues. The Labour Party is well supported and a number of residents have been candidates for the council elections, but none has ever gained a seat. The Labour Party rhetoric maintains its links with the working class areas of the city, but the local gatherings represent the intellectual middle class socialists. The Labour Party Christmas party and summer barbecue are as far removed as is possible to imagine from the neighbouring ward where the working class hold fish and chip suppers and outings to the seaside.

On the Denton Estate, Labour Party meetings are held in the houses of members. Newcomers to the area complained to me that the meetings are lacking in warmth and comradeship. There is a clique of old party members who are able to exploit their history in the Labour Party to turn decisions to their advantage. Newcomers have to serve a long apprenticeship before being accepted. I attended over a period of a year, and meetings seem to move with irritating slowness as members weigh the import of each decision

taken. I only attended meetings chaired by men, and noticed that some other participants seemed to savour the slow pace.

The Communist Party apparently has no members within the estate and only one person subscribed to 'Marxism Today'. I discovered these 'facts' from the person who delivers the 'Morning Star' and from the local newsagent when I went to order my copy of 'Marxism Today'. 'The Guardian' but occasionally 'The Times' is seen in every household with little evidence of either 'Woman' and 'Woman's Own' or 'Cosmopolitan' and 'Options'. The newsagent, however, assured me that 'Parents' magazine sold well.

Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament has a local group started as 'Mothers Against the Bomb'. This group is far more aware of sexism in language and organisation, and women predominate as chairperson and treasurer. The meetings are held in houses on the Denton Estate and like the Labour Party meetings, tend to move slowly but centring on issues about fund raising rather than policy.

There are also organisations which are mainly for women. There is a branch of the National Housewives' Register which draws its membership solely from the Denton Estate and surrounding area. This was formed so that women can meet and discuss issues outside domesticity. However, traditional concerns creep in. The list of speakers in 1982 included a talk on flower arranging, a child psychologist and the local midwife. The Housewives' Register meetings are relatively well attended, drawing 15 or 20 women throughout the year. Men are rarely invited to the meetings. However, there is a twice-yearly party when spouses are invited. These are events when the funds provide the drink, and food is provided by the women.

Other local organisations which flourish are the babysitting groups which are largely based on separate streets. They hold coffee mornings

which women and children attend, and the conversation covers house renovation, house prices and families moving in and out of the area. Inevitably children and their development is also a constant topic. Some babysitting groups support their local single parent families with free tickets. Most do not. In the evenings men are just as likely, if not more likely, to babysit than women. They bring their work and watch the television. However when the child to be cared for is a new baby, men meet some resistance. Alex told me:

"I answered the phone. They wanted a sitter the next day. I said 'Yes I'll come'. Then the woman said, 'Well I'd rather your wife did it because the baby is very young.'"

The house

In this area the middle class men and women have a very different relationship to the house, the community and the area. It is understood that women are mainly responsible for the decor and atmosphere of the home, and much discussion at coffee mornings revolves around house decoration. Renovating houses is the main cohesive force in many marriages, it would appear. Couples undertake the joint commitment to the house. The investment in the house is tremendous. As I shall later discuss the women often undertake the decoration while men are at work in the day. Employed women also seem to organise the decor, or take a decisive role in its organisation.

However a housewife's relationship to the space is different from her husband's. The whole house is hers during the day but friends usually sit in the kitchen - which is usually large and airy, and children can wander out into the garden. The kitchen is very much her area. When the husband

comes home, the women leave or have already left. This is similar to Nadine Gordimer's memories of her childhood in South Africa. Writing about her mother's friends she said:

"The afternoon was their own domain, but the evening belonged to the menfolk. None of them had anything to say to my father, the warm flow of their talk always dried up the instant he walked in. They wanted to pack themselves and the evidence of their close and personal preoccupations - the ridiculous dangle of baby booties, the embroidered crash bags holding tangled silks - out of his way. 'A man wants his home to himself', Mrs Cluff often said." (Gordimer 1985).

This division of time in the home into women's time and men's time is familiar on the Denton Estate. When women are home with young children, time is organised around schedules set by the husband's work and the children's demands. The evidence of coffee mornings or tea parties is usually cleared away before the husband comes home. Rachael had a practical reason for this:

"If the cups are still out he comes in and says 'I suppose you've been sitting around all day drinking coffee', trying to suggest I don't do anything. Betsy is four and Jamie is two, so you know what I do..."

Time may be organised around his work while the wife is at home. The space in the house may also reflect his priorities.

Many of the men I talked to from the traditional families had a work area at home. Allan:

"I've got to have somewhere to work - an extension of the office really".

Most of the women had no space which was all their own (except perhaps the kitchen). Kate commented:

"I don't have anywhere where I can say 'this is mine, this is my space and I can do what I like in it.'"

Even children have their own bedrooms, but the tradition of shared marital beds means that the bedroom is also shared for women. This does not necessarily change for employed mothers. Josephine and Liz both felt they had no space in their house to call their own (Chapter 5).

Friendship

The relationship to the community is usually more tenuous for men and women in paid work. It is still the case that the woman makes friendships with other women in the area and the men often meet because of initial introductions through their wives. Men have friends at work, but at home the social group is usually based on women's friendships. This is more the case for new residents. Women meet through school friendships between children, at mother and toddler groups and in the relentless process of ferrying children around. On arrival in the area, the woman will usually meet one or two other women who will introduce her to a circle of friends.

On the outskirts of the area are three pubs in which local residents are conspicuously absent. Usually they are frequented by younger people who are rather more trendy than the residents of the Denton Estate. In the summer however, families stroll around the estate and along the river and sit outside the pubs with their children.

The people

I concentrated on 15 couples from the Denton Estate. The women are in their thirties usually married to older men. I also talked to five mothers in paid employment who also have young children, and four divorced couples both mothers and fathers. These people are all middle class (see discussion on class, Chapter 2).

Grandparents

Of their own parents, over half of their mothers are housewives and possibly have been for all their married lives. Of the mothers who are employed, some are doctors or teachers. The fathers' occupations are quite varied but most come from middle class backgrounds.

Education

Their education shows that all these people went on to some form of higher education, mainly university. In many cases the women's education has been equal or superior to their husbands'. However, this does not relate to later employment. None of the women have higher status jobs than their husbands. The majority of the women in this study are housewives at the moment, taking care of young children.

Many of the couples met at college or university. Although this is not shown in the table, ten of these couples met while completing their education. Some were studying here in this town. If they remain, it is often because the husband obtained a research post at the university and then was promoted to a lectureship. None of the women, even those who studied at this university, are employed there.

Some of the couples travelled together before buying a house. Jenny and Alex toured the USA for a year. Kate and Gerald spent two years in South America. Anna and Malcolm worked in Africa. Barbara and George lived in Germany where he was stationed with the Army. Mary and Julian worked and travelled through a number of continents. Fiona and Allan lived in India.

For Rachael and Michael it was a second marriage for both. Hazel's daughter Rebecca was the child of a previous relationship. Julian had also been married before his marriage to Mary.

Most couples spent their early married life in smaller houses in other areas. Both were working at the time. The move to this town was usually precipitated by his change of job: fourteen out of 20 couples moved here because he got a job in this town. They moved to the Denton Estate because of all the areas of the city it is recognised as academic suburbia. The houses are attractive. The area is central but near the river, the roads are relatively safe and neighbours will often be middle class with growing families.

Many of these couples bought houses near the Denton Estate and waited a year or so before moving into the estate. It is not easy to find the right house at the right price. Rose explains:

Rose:

"I always wanted to live here."

Carole:

"We bought nearby and waited for the right place on the Denton Estate."

Anna:

"I was determined to get a house round here."

In the next section I want to begin the ethnographic work with a discussion of family life in the middle class community on the Denton Estate, especially emphasising how the expectations and lives of women and men are very different.

CHAPTER 5

IDEAS ABOUT PARENTHOOD AND FAMILY LIFE ON THE DENTON ESTATE

In the next three chapters I will explore the attitudes towards parenthood and family life on the Denton Estate. In the first section the importance of 'the family' to some of the residents of the Denton Estate is discussed. The family is largely seen as the appropriate setting for childrearing but neither men nor women deny that as parents their experiences and commitment are different.

The images of family life which underlie middle class parenthood are the subject matter of this chapter. These images incorporate a traditional division of labour both emotional and physical, and this is true for all kinds of families, traditional, employed mothers and single parent mothers and fathers. In all these families the concept of 'the family', and the organisation of parenthood which it implies, means that the lives of men and women are different, and that these differences are the result of a division of labour which sees women as mothers and men as fathers.

Commitment to Family Life

In discussing family life with some of the residents, the commitment comes over very clearly from both men and women.

Gerald described how the desire to have his own family was a deep principle for organising his life.

Gerald:

"I never wanted anything else but a family not identical to the one I grew up in but having been brought up in a large family I always felt that I wanted a family myself. Never, never ever have I ever had any other thoughts and I suppose gradually worked towards that."

Before the family, however, comes marriage, and Gerald wanted to get married because he had been lonely on his own.

Gerald:

"When I had been living for lengthy periods on my own I have always found it deeply unsatisfactory, being very unhappy."

LH:

"Have you been lonely?"

Gerald:

"On my own extremely lonely."

The family is central to Gerald's expectation of life. He made it a priority to establish a family life for himself as a conscious principle.

Gerald:

"I didn't analyse (it) in great depth - just something I knew I wanted."

Kate, his wife, also made a conscious commitment to the family and for her having a third child was a statement about that commitment.

Kate:

"I felt quite strongly that to have a third child would be a positive thing. I think if we really felt we were going to stick together and make it a good marriage, to have a third child then, I felt it was a positive statement that we were going to get through the hard times."

Rose asserted the benefit of 'family life' for children - thinking undoubtedly of the nuclear family.

Rose:

"I don't think it's positively bad for children not to grow up in families. I do think it's good for them but not positively bad not to."

Her neighbour, Barry, strongly believes that life with two parents is desirable.

Barry:

"... but I think it's nice if the children can have a cushioned life for a while and I think that two parents can do that better than one, because they share things."

He suggests that the children also benefit if the parents are dissimilar and therefore offer the children different kinds of support and experience.

Barry:

"It is good if the parents are different types. We happen to be very different people, you know I'm the down to earth practical sort and Jo's more academic and between us they can find releases for whatever they want to do, except that I don't always have the time to do things with them as I'd like."

He explains the commitment to the family in terms of his own background and upbringing in the fifties when divorce was less commonplace and suggests that this produced children who were 'normal'.

Barry:

"I went to a mixed public school - in with a lot of other people who were relatively normal - good families - no children with social hang-ups. Back in the late fifties, early sixties people would hold their marriages together much more than they would do now, so they all had mums and dads and no split up families."

Conforming to a stereotype of family life is important to Barry although he and Jo have to work quite hard to bring their lives together.

Barry:

"It's funny, we have relatively separate lives in the same house, but it does come together a bit at weekends, and we are very glad of any opportunities to do things together. We sort of feel that we know that's what we should be doing."

Malcolm sees the area as intrusive. He feels that the neighbourhood in which he lives actually militates against family life in its most intense form because there are always non-family members interrupting his family life. He regrets that.

Malcolm:

"There aren't as many situations in many ways as I would like perhaps where we are just left with the family to sink or swim because almost always there is somebody else who they will want to go and play with."

LH:

"So that is a cause of regret in fact that you don't have that?"

Malcolm:

"Yes it is a cause of minor regret."

It was Gerald who expressed his need for the family, but he points to the good and bad aspects of family life. It is often intensely emotional and claustrophobic.

Gerald:

"Often you're all cooped up in a small house and things are tough. Its raining outside and the kids are all snotty and everybody is a bit overworked. I do feel we can all survive that. We can all have a bloody good row, that's how we survive."

The possibility of aggression erupting in the family is just one of its less attractive features. Harry has a more ambivalent attitude towards the family - probably associated with his general ambivalence towards children. If he was not already a 'family man' he is sure he would regard family life with anxiety.

Harry:

"To be perfectly honest, if I was outside I wouldn't like it very much. I mean that's absolutely true. Before I got married I was always rather relieved that children weren't mine. If I were outside this family I would think like that. But once you're in it you can't. That's the commitment in a sense. I regard children in abstract as rather unpleasant messy things."

Having undertaken the commitment, Harry does take family life very seriously and is quite traditional in his expectations. Hazel, his wife, is also very committed to the family. She drew attention to the centrality

of the family in her life. She also assumes that Harry would always put the interests of the family before his career.

Hazel:

"The family is extremely important for both of us and I think, for both of us should there be a conflict of interest between say Harry's job and our family life, ultimately family life would come first. I think he would find this harder now than I would because I am still very much more caught up with the domestic scene than ever he is."

By this Hazel means that she has spent a number of years at home while Harry has worked as an art historian. Hazel says that she finds it difficult to understand how couples can contemplate splitting up when they have children. The decisions involved seem too difficult, especially those concerning the children.

Hazel:

"When our friends split up one of the things that gives us most cause for puzzlement is knowing how much we both have emotionally invested in the children. We find this extremely hard to conceive, of things getting so bad that we would expose ourselves to having to make totally impossible decisions about who is going to be nearest to them most of the time."

This commitment to family life was voiced by many of the people in the community. Janet believes the family means security for the children.

Janet:

"They (the children) deserve a good start in life and doing the best for the children keeps me here every day."

Jeffrey, her husband, agrees that children must be prioritised. For this reason married couples should try to make marriage work.

Jeffrey:

"If you ask me the truth I must say that I don't believe the disruption of a family is good for the kids. Divorce is always difficult for them. I would try very hard to keep my family life together."

Barbara and George are about to leave the Denton Estate as he has a new job. Barbara and the children have been very happy here but she feels she must follow his work for the sake of family harmony.

Barbara:

"Sorry to leave - we all will be but we'll make a new life and its important to stay together and George needs this change of job. Family life will go on somewhere else."

Meg and Paul are also very committed to family life and this commitment is reinforced by their shared Catholic religion which discourages divorce.

Meg:

"A lot of our projects we all do together. Being together is a very big part of our life. Having said that I must admit that as the children get older they have very different ideas from us about holidays and what to do on a Saturday night!"

On a number of occasions at different events people from the estate discussed the importance of keeping the family together and giving the children an experience of nuclear family life. Fiona points to the negative aspects of being a single parent.

Fiona:

"I just would not want to be on my own with the children. It seems such a hard life financially and emotionally when I look round at people who've chosen that."

Brigit confirms this idea that life is too difficult alone with children. She has worked as a childminder.

Brigit:

"Lots of these little ones have been to me because I do childminding. It's not that I think they suffer so much but it's a hard life for the mother."

Brigit is aware of marriage as a commitment for life.

Brigit:

"I went into this (marriage) knowing it would be for 20 or 30 years - making a proper job of family life."

All the people introduced so far are married. Inevitably single parents have a rather different view of family life which often largely excludes the ex-spouse. Tess feels this strongly.

Tess:

"This is my family. The children, the house and me. I don't think of Neil as any part of it."

This is echoed by Ellen.

Ellen:

"The boys and I, we are 'the family' and I support them and I get a lot back. They see John so rarely that it hardly means anything. I am mother and father."

Sandra felt committed to family life.

Sandra:

"The children are my family. The only family I've got."

But interestingly her ex-husband Paul also felt that the children were part of his family.

Paul:

"I don't see them all the time but I see them every week and the bonds are very strong. They know and love their grandparents and my brother. I really believe 'family' is important and these kids are the centre of that feeling for me."

When Paul's children are at his house they are re-absorbed into a nuclear family with his new wife Gaynor as the mother substitute. The walls are lined with 'family' portraits with Gaynor, Paul and the children.

There is an established view of the nuclear family as being the best situation for bringing up children and this view is shared by many members

of the middle class community on the Denton Estate. Some families seem to go to great lengths to give the impression of a happy family life and many people, men and women, expressed a tremendous commitment to the nuclear family. Some of the women suggested that being a single parent was too difficult to contemplate. Single parents had an understandably different view of what constitutes a family.

Clearly commitment to some vision of family life permeates the whole area, but family life means different things to men and women because family responsibilities are different for each. This is true in the traditional family, families where the mother works and single parent families.

Parenthood and different expectations

What then is family life and what does it mean to women and men within this community? Is parenthood a different proposition for men and women? Gerald, who is married to Kate, feels his emotional commitment to the children is different from hers.

Gerald:

"It's different, whether it should be or not is something else. I think it's very different. It's hard to say exactly why."

Gerald sees Kate as being rather more understanding, more inclined to agonise over decisions about discipline, and to consider the background to the children's problems.

Gerald:

"There are little instances when things are tough and the kids feel lousy or something and I feel much more inclined to say 'We're getting on top of each other, somebody has got to go out of this room and it's not going to be me. One of them has to go upstairs, now!' Kate may arrive at the same point too. And one of them will end up upstairs."

But she's much more inclined to see what their problem is perhaps and if there is a problem and it will need sorting out, or appreciating that if the problem is a very long term one actually or they need a bit of sympathy not just being shoved upstairs while we all cool off."

He suggests that Kate's approach means she agonises over problems with the children and she suffers from greater anxiety than him. Gerald assumes that everybody will survive without permanent psychological damage whatever the causes of argument. Kate tries to understand the children's emotional responses.

Kate:

"I live it out - suffer with them so I try to understand until I get fed up with it of course."

Gerald suggests that Kate suffers more.

Gerald:

"This commitment can backfire on her and then she spends hours wondering what's gone wrong with one of them. I feel that when we're all very tired and get depressed and argue then I'm much more inclined to say, 'Hell, they'll get over it and we'll get over it too', and we'll all survive it and we do all get over it. I do think that is a different kind of commitment."

This 'different kind of commitment' is one of the themes which underlies this study. Kate both invests more and suffers more.

When her son was ill in hospital she left her job to be with him.

Kate:

"When (my son) was ill I did actually have a job to do - the Florence Nightingale bit. But I did get quite a lot out of it."

A mother's commitment does not necessarily lessen when she returns to work. Josephine, who had returned to teaching when Sam was three, still found that her emotional commitment was not diminished. She found it difficult to give up her involvement in the everyday running of life.

Josephine:

"I used to worry if they went out without a coat on or something like that, and whether they had dressed adequately and had the right food to eat, that sort of thing. And I've found it very difficult to relinquish that when I went back to work properly - to actually not be there at lunch-time when Sam was being fed. Not to be tuned in to him, not to know what was happening to him. And then in the evenings to come back and not be quite sure that he had been well during the day."

Barry, Josephine's husband, acknowledges this emotional investment. He suggests she suffers because of it.

Barry:

"She (Josephine) feels she's missing out (by being out at work) and she suffers most about that."

Malcolm suggests that there are differences between himself and his wife, Anna, in the emotional investment in the children. He also points out that his affection for his children is different from the emotions he feels about his wife.

Malcolm:

"One's emotional ties are in them, they are different kinds to your wife's. But, in their own way, they are just as strong. You know they are going to push off in the end. When it comes to it, they are not going to be particularly interested in you, so it's a kind of bitter-sweet thing, different from the relationship that you have with another adult."

Anna, his wife, has been at home with children for eight years. She explained that she likes children, but is self-deprecating when she suggests that this is a kind of immaturity.

Anna:

"I like children - that must be a sort of immature thing - it's easier in a way to talk to children..."

Anna believes that childrearing extends her emotions and taps into very deep issues in her life.

Anna:

"They get problems and you work out how to solve them, in that respect it's quite traumatic. But it's nice seeing them develop and you get a lot back from children."

It is clear how the investment in time and emotion makes Malcolm a very different parent from Anna. With one of his children, Lucy, he has very little relationship at the moment.

Anna:

"Well he finds Lucy more difficult. Lucy goes to bed at seven and he never gets in until seven. So he sees her for five minutes to say goodnight. And in the morning she is one of these children who wake up early, but then he is helpless in the morning. He can't talk to anybody in the morning. So he still doesn't actually see much of her except for at weekends."

In some ways Malcolm is 'missing out'. Jenny also believes Alex has this problem. She gets a great emotional response from the children because she is always there.

Jenny:

"I think he (Alex) misses out. I think fathers do in that if they're hurt or anything goes wrong it's always 'I want mummy' and they will often push him off. He doesn't invest as much time with them... it's obvious that with the younger ones I am more important than he is... I'm their security really."

Alex admits to a 'heavy workload' but he tries to combine leisure with childcare in the summer.

Alex:

"I do have a heavy workload and I like to play cricket in the summer although the children come and watch."

Rose, who has two children also feels her relationship is more affectionate and spontaneous because of her greater investment. This is true despite the fact that she is now a mother in employment.

Rose:

"I get the greater emotional pleasure and it's returned."

LH:

"You put most in?"

Rose:

"I put most in. I also get most out. I'm sure I get most out...
(Chris) doesn't get the spontaneous affection that I get from them.
Both of them are very spontaneous with me."

Chris's interest in the children has grown over time. When they were babies he left Rose to do all the childcare.

Chris:

"There was a time when childcare was very imbalanced particularly when the kids were much younger. I probably didn't do anything like as much as I should have done. But I am a lot more interested in the kids now they are older."

Interestingly Dennis found his relationship with his children emotionally enriching, and unlike any of the mothers he was able to describe fatherhood as a 'complete joy'. He felt that his children had been 'absolutely no trouble'.

Dennis:

"Our kids have been absolutely no trouble and a complete joy, and so that the experience has been utterly different from what I think either of us expected in that sense. A lot easier, a bit tiring and wearing at times but no way would I say that our kids were any trouble. And I'm always staggered at people who always manage to make such a mountain out of bringing up kids."

His wife Peggy was not able to be quite so wholehearted. She had been depressed when the children were babies.

"It's got better as they've got older - there was a big gap between my children so I got over my depression. At first I just resented being at home - I just sort of came to terms with it."

Even in this relationship the commitment to the children is different. Dennis seems to have had a lot of pleasure from the children, but Peggy stayed at home, with the children and suffered from depression. Her experience of childrearing and family life was different from his. How did these differences become established? Peggy discussed how the nuclear family is repeated in her life because inertia confirms the usual pattern of family life.

Peggy:

"We don't organise it, it just happens. I don't think we have ever consciously sat down and organised it, it's just that we do think rather similarly about things. We are quite alike in many ways, not terribly extroverted people and we are both interested to a certain extent in the same things and I suppose we were brought up fairly similarly so we tend to repeat the pattern."

Peggy points out that it is difficult to know what 'normal family life' is like because everybody lives in their own home without very much contact with other families.

Peggy:

"I think in a way my children have a fair amount of freedom. It's difficult to tell because one doesn't know how other people organise their children and you tend to live in a vacuum with your marriage and with your children."

Most of the other couples who were interviewed seemed to agree that parenthood was a different proposition for women and men. Fiona gave a rather jaundiced view when she suggested that "I do all the work for the children and he enjoys them in the evenings." Other women felt that they were lucky - their husbands took responsibility when they were at home.

Liz:

"John does do 'his share' he really does. He took them away last summer for three weeks to give me a break."

However Liz also says:

"That's not to suggest that over eight years I haven't done the most because I have."

Diane says that Peter "always takes them to his mother at the weekend" and Carole reports that Raymond "often takes over when he's at home". Obviously there are differences in expectations between families on the Denton Estate and even more clearly there are differences in parenting roles between men and women. Both men and women point to women's greater emotional commitment to their children or at least to a different kind of commitment. Certainly the traditions of society direct men and women into different experiences of childrearing, although some studies show that there is no inevitability about this (Russell 1978).

Everybody in the area is well aware that life is different for men and women. The input is different and the expectations are different. Investigating these differences in commitment and lifestyle to which women and men both refer is the focus of the next two chapters. I have suggested in the first chapter that motherhood is the potential focus for contradictory experiences and emotions because it continues to imply an element of both self-denial and fulfilment. In the next two chapters I shall follow discussions about motherhood and fatherhood very closely to see what contradictions emerge, and how they are resolved or repressed in the lives of some middle class families on the Denton Estate.

In the light of these investigations I shall look at evidence about the language of equality, who speaks it and on what basis any claims for increasing equality between women and men might be based.

CHAPTER 6

MOTHERHOOD

Introduction

In this section I shall investigate the ways in which motherhood and the division of labour are understood and justified by these middle class women. Firstly I shall look at the reasons they give for having children. Who made the decision to have children and what kind of agreements, implicit or explicit, were made about their care in the early years? The answers to some of these questions should reveal some of the underlying assumptions about responsibilities in the family.

The next part looks at these responsibilities more closely. What does this job 'mother' include? Is there some standard to which all or most of these women conform? I have already discussed (Chapter 2) how womanhood and domesticity are linked in our culture, and yet there is no logical reason why the fact of childbirth should inevitably involve a woman in monopolising the cooking and housework. This section also looks at the ways in which motherhood is a relationship with children and husbands. The final part of this section is about guilt and anxiety, which seems to be an inescapable part of motherhood on the Denton Estate.

The next part of this chapter concerns decisions about staying at home and going back to paid employment. In our society it is very difficult for women to maintain their paid employment when they have very young children. Furthermore our society reinforces a view of motherhood and childhood whereby mothers need their children and children need their mothers as an exclusive duo. Even fathers who want to be an equal partner

can rarely secure sufficient paternity leave to enjoy their young children (Bell, McKee et al 1983).

The last part of this section looks at aspects of the married relationships on the Denton Estate, especially 'her relationship to him'. After discussing why these women say they got married in the first place, I shall go on to consider how the women support the men in their careers and how this affects the organisation of family life. The final part deals with single-parent mothers and their attitudes to their ex-husbands.

Clearly it is not a simple task to compartmentalise people's lives. In trying to understand the organisation of family life on the Denton Estate, I have looked at some of the same issues from different perspectives. For example, there is some mention of supporting the male career in the section on motherhood and what it includes, although, this is dealt more fully in 'Her relationship with him'.

1) Why Have Children?

There is no longer any inevitability about having children - efficient contraception has successfully taken care of that. Nor are children used as part of the workforce. They are no longer necessary for subsistence agriculture nor can they necessarily be relied upon to care for their parents into old age. So why have children, or more specifically why did these women on the Denton Estate decide to have children? The decision was taken in the context of marriage and the normality of family life. Women saw childrearing as natural and inevitable, giving meaning to their lives as the career gave meaning to their husbands' lives. Many explained that the initial decision to have children rested with them, often against their husbands' wishes.

Anna says her first child was a mistake. She takes all responsibility for her first pregnancy, because of her forgetfulness over contraception.

Anna:

"We had children because we went on a walking holiday and I forgot to take my cap with me. And that's what often happens with first children."

However, Anna's husband reacted very differently.

Anna:

"Malcolm was upset and didn't want any children and really wanted me to have an abortion and I felt very different because I was actually thrilled and couldn't say that I was thrilled. And luckily I was so ill that I didn't feel very thrilled most of the time."

Anna says she really enjoys her children.

Anna:

"It's what I like doing best."

She suggests that children bring an emotional dimension to life.

Anna:

"You tend to make very emotional decisions."

Since the period of this research Anna has gone on to have two more children when she was over forty.

Carole agrees that very emotional elements are involved when deciding to have children, but has not got a clear explanation for why she had two children.

Carole:

"I realised I did want a child... I think it was emotional. I still don't know why people have children."

However Carole was sterilised after the second child, having decided that two were enough. She cannot understand the desire for lots of children,

but she is an artist who had found a career in graphic design in the last year. She therefore has a viable alternative to motherhood.

Carole:

"I've been sterilised now... when I see tiny babies now, I can pat them, burp them, do anything I like and really enjoy them, but I don't want another one. Not at all... I've got a very good friend who's got five children and I remember saying to her 'Just tell me, is more better? Why did you have five?'"

It might seem that having an alternative career to childcare might encourage women to have fewer children. Kate, however, was a talented cellist. She now has four children. She also suggests an emotional, 'instinctive' aspect to decisions to have children.

Kate:

"The desire for children is a very basic feeling, 'woman instincts', 'maternal instincts'. I don't know. My sister had children and I thought that was quite nice."

Like most of the other women she accepts the responsibility for the decision to have children. Kate said that she and Gerald wanted a third child, but he left the decision to her, both understanding that she would be responsible for it while it was very young.

Kate:

"I think we'd always wanted another child, Gerald does like small children, but I know he's gone through phases not spending much time with them. He decided the decision to have the third child should be mine because the major part of the work with a third child would be mine at first anyway."

And Kate takes all responsibility for their decision.

Kate:

"I'm fairly conscious of not bringing the third child into our arguments and disagreements. I think 'Well I've chosen to have a third child.'"

She also suggests that the third child was part of a commitment to keep her marriage alive. "It was part of reviving my marriage." The third and later the fourth child may have fulfilled this aim, but they also removed Kate from the possibility of paid work for a number of years. The logistics of substitute childcare were too complicated. Kate says "It has become too difficult to contemplate".

The woman's decision to have a child often means that she is almost totally responsible for it during the first years of life. Josephine, who now works full-time as a teacher, certainly felt that the responsibility for children should be hers because she decided to have them at that time.

Josephine:

"I had precipitated the decision to have children and Barry wasn't very keen. OK he agreed, but he would have deferred it a bit longer. He still felt he had his business to establish. I was very prepared, with Tom particularly to always clean his nappies. Barry never changed a nappy for Tom."

Josephine was then at home until her second child was three years old.

Jenny felt that she may as well invest time in parenthood by having three or four children. Once again the decision was hers, and Jenny says that having at least three children felt like a proper investment in motherhood. More than that she says that having several children "justifies her existence".

Jenny:

"I wanted to have them close originally. I wanted to invest in being a parent. When I was going to be a parent I said I was going to go overboard and not going to have just one, but to look after two or three or four, and then I would go back to work. In some ways it's a lot easier. I couldn't really justify my existence with just one."

Jenny has never returned to work as her fourth child was born when she was forty and she continues to be involved full-time in childcare. Jenny's use of language is interesting. She says 'parent' but means mother just as

Carole said 'people' (in an earlier quote) meaning women. Clearly it is sexist to use terms like 'men' and 'women' in contexts where one ought to leave open the possibility that either sex might be involved in that particular role. However it is hardly non-sexist to say 'people' where you mean 'women' and 'parent' where you mean 'mother'. The experience which both women describe is one which women undertake - staying at home with children and investing in them to give meaning to life at that time. The term 'parent' becomes a way of disguising who it is who continues to undertake the hard work of childcare, and is a way of hiding the contradictions which women experience by implying that men might also choose this path. However they rarely do so.

Unlike Jenny, Janet wanted only one or two children. The discovery that she could not conceive a child made Janet realise that she was happy to adopt.

LH:

"Did you want to have your own children?"

Janet:

"Oh no I wasn't particularly keen. I was quite pleased actually to adopt because I thought the whole business of childbirth and that scene - breast-feeding, I didn't fancy in fact. I don't think I was that desperate to have kids... Jeffrey always wanted to have kids... I guess it wasn't until we were actually told we would never have kids that I actually realised I did want them. Well, one anyway, and that's when we decided to adopt."

When she was about to adopt a second baby Janet found she was pregnant with the twins. She became very committed to full-time motherhood. "I believe I ought to be at home."

These women saw the pattern of their lives develop as a consequence of having children. Having had one child, the decision to have more helps to

justify a proper commitment to motherhood. Interestingly there are almost no families in this community with only one child.

Peggy says she had children to justify staying at home. Her working life was in a rut and having children seemed like a way out. She had no idea what life would be like with children, as she had never seen children being brought up.

Peggy:

"I think I was just rather bored with what I was doing and I don't think I actually thought consciously what it would be like. If I had I doubt if it would have borne any relation to what it was like really."

From her account, the first two children were the result of joint decisions between her and Dennis. However the fact that she was bored at work undoubtedly precipitated events.

Peggy:

"... we had Ben because we wanted one child and we had been married for some time and it seemed the next step in a sense, and then we had Simon and Dennis was quite happy."

Peggy then really wanted another child and was waiting to adopt a baby. It was not clear what was the basis of her decision to adopt, except that Dennis was rather opposed to more than two children in a family. But Peggy was clearly most anxious to have a third child one way or another.

Peggy:

"We were going to adopt a child - we were offered a child after Simon, but it was a long wait and I got a bit anxious, because although we were accepted there is no guarantee that you will get a child, you don't know how long it will be so I became pregnant with Ian."

This third child was clearly a result of Peggy's decision to have three children. This was not taken with Dennis' agreement. On the contrary he had moral objections to having more than two children.

Peggy:

"I think Dennis was quite happy to have the two and then adopt. Though he loves Ian very much I think he felt that we shouldn't have three partly because there are too many people in the world. He feels quite strongly about the population, but I didn't when it came down to me. So it wasn't a joint decision to have three, I suppose it was my decision."

Rose also made the decision to have children, and suggests that motherhood was an essential aspect of her emotional development as an adult woman. She prioritised motherhood above having a career.

Rose:

"I wanted children. I'm glad I've had children. I would have been very sorry not to have had children."

LH:

"Even knowing that you weren't going to get on in your career and everything?"

Rose:

"Yes, I was still determined I was going to have children. Yes."

LH:

"So they give you something that nothing else can?"

Rose:

"To me they have yes. Yes I can't imagine life not having had any children. I could never not have had them."

Rose has two children. Like Peggy she had no clear idea what motherhood would involve. She was influenced by a romantic vision of motherhood and childhood, but the experience of motherhood was not as idyllic as she expected.

Rose:

"I thought bringing up little children would be the happiest time of my life. It would be absolutely wonderful and I have had quite a nice time but it wasn't as wonderful as I thought it would be, and that's changed my attitude to life quite a lot."

She thought that she would be able to draw upon her experience as a teacher but did not find her own children so receptive to her ideas.

Rose:

"... I pictured myself with my little toddlers sitting round the table doing wonderful things with them... Giving them all my attention and the benefit of my teaching experience. Somehow it just doesn't work out that way. I love being with them. It just wasn't as wonderful as I thought it would be. Children don't necessarily want to do what you want to do."

In answer to the question, 'Why did you have children?', a whole range of answers were given. Carole, Anna and Kate suggest the decision was 'emotional'. Other women were more specific and suggested that motherhood rescued them from a tedious job or helped to revive a marriage. Women on the Denton Estate say that they make decisions about the number and spacing of their children, and this clearly gives them some kinds of power in the relationship. However, this role as decision-maker may mean that in exercising their power, women are forced into greater dependency on their husbands, and childcare removes them from the possibility of employment for long periods.

This evidence is in contradiction to the work of Busfield and Paddon. In their study of why people have children, they found women deciding to have babies because their husbands wanted them. They used interview material from 50 married women from all social classes carried out between 1966 and 1967, as well as some survey material. Their interviews showed how many people have children because they are thought to give an emotional dimension to life which nothing else can provide. The perspective of their study reflects a commitment to family life and marriage. Conflict and tension are discussed under the section on uncertainty and negotiation. It is in this section that they point to a certain level of husband domination in decision-making.

"It was not that the husband was held, either by himself or his wife, to have the right to make decisions within the context of family life, without taking his wife's interests into account; but what the wives (and no doubt some husbands expected this), made it clear that they felt that they wanted to try and please their husbands and that they should try and do what they knew their husbands wanted." (Busfield and Paddon 1977, pp.213-4). →

The research material in the present study points to women having children because they want them, often against the wishes of their husbands. These differences may possibly be accounted for by class differences. All the women in this study are educated middle class women, and they know that they want to have children because they give up their paid work to have them. Also I suggest that language itself has changed, and fewer women would now describe themselves as handing their lives over to their husbands to make decisions for them. Although their lives may not really be substantially different from that of the earlier generation, ways of justifying and explaining our lives to ourselves may have changed.

Later interview material will show that Peggy, Anna and Jenny all have husbands who have tried to encourage them back into paid work. Instead they went on to have third or fourth babies. During the period of this study Anna, who is now 44 (in 1989), had two more children when she was over 40. Jenny who is also over 40 had her fourth child and Kate, also over 40 has four children. They all replied 'an accident' when asked why they had late babies. One employed mother referred to them as 'the geriatric baby brigade'.

For Jenny the experience has been traumatic. Alex, her husband, was "angry, very angry" when he heard about the pregnancy. He wanted Jenny to have an abortion, but he got used to the idea. Jenny was obviously pleased. "I've always wanted four children" she said.

These late babies ensure that these women will be out of the job market for another five years and then it may be too late to start a real commitment to a worthwhile job. Entering employment at 45 with a 20 year gap is a hopeless prospect at the present time. The assumption must be therefore that they do not intend to go back into paid employment.

Within the marital power struggle, women's power may lie in being resolutely feminine and motherly and refusing the double burden of housework and paid work. This is, of course, double-edged, because it makes them more dependent than ever.

There is a certain momentum in decisions about children which once taken direct women into dependency upon men and reinforce the economic power of men over women. These decisions also propel women into years of childcare and housework. All the women in this study were reconciled to this because of their decisions to have the children in the first place. They were all committed to a role of "total mothering" at least for some years. Susannah Ginsberg's research investigated some of the reasons why women expected to take total responsibility for childcare as part of the job of mother. She suggests that pressures come from many sources and that women feel that motherhood 'ought' to bring fulfilment, if they agree to this complete commitment.

"The expectations women have that full-time childcare is a personal responsibility and duty, from which they ought to derive fulfilment is reinforced by external pressures imposed from the women's environment, particularly by husbands, mothers, mother-in-law and friends." (Ginsberg 1981, p.79).

Certainly the women interviewed on the Denton Estate suggested that motherhood had given their lives an emotional dimension, and as is discussed later many mothers see going out to work as a dereliction of duty. This however may be related to class ideologies about motherhood.

Mary Boulton interviewed a wide variety of women from all classes about motherhood for her study, and she found that although two-thirds of the women said that caring for children gave their lives meaning and value, one third did not.

"Over a third did not and among working class women the proportion rose to as high as a half. Children may bring a sense of meaning and purpose but they do not necessarily do so... children may bring no more than an 'appropriate' or socially desirable role." (Boulton 1983, p.119).

Perhaps the middle class view of domesticity precludes the acknowledgement of any ambivalence about the value of having had children. Certainly for these women on the Denton Estate, having decided to have children, middle-class motherhood took them over. No woman expressed any regrets about having children, although they expressed ambivalence about the lifestyle which motherhood seems to demand.

2) What Does Mothering Include?

Meg:

"If you're responsible for the children it's easy, very easy to assume responsibility for all those other jobs."

In reality it is almost impossible not to take 'responsibility for all those other jobs'. If the woman is at home with the children and the man is out at work it seems almost inevitable that mother and housewife become synonymous.

Kate suggests that mothering changes with the age of the child. When children are very young some household chores, like cleaning the floors, are essential.

Kate:

"I'm continually reassessing what mothering includes, whether it includes keeping the house clean and cooking. When they are tiny it has to be reasonably clean because they are going to eat all the rubbish from the floor or fall into the fire. I would include that in mothering then. I wouldn't now."

As Kate says that different things are included at different stages when deciding what is included in the job. However there are certain imperatives which restrict the lifestyle of middle class women at home with children because these mothers are also wives. This means working for the husband - shopping, cooking, cleaning. This is part of the personal dependency of women on men once they undertake full-time mothering within marriage. There is some evidence that women do most of the work even before they are mothers and after the children have left home because the pattern is ingrained (Time Budget Studies, Chapter 1). In our society domestic work is seen as the responsibility of women - of all women - not simply mothers. Kate suggests that it is the responsibility for childcare which has trapped her into housework. However the opposite is also true. The 'natural' relationship between women and housework makes it easier for women to assume all the childcare responsibility.

Providing a resource for the family

Housework and childcare are certainly part of these women's lives and there is a high commitment to running a complete servicing agency. Many writers on the subject of women at home have found it useful to divide housework and childcare. Ann Oakley found men more willing to participate in childcare than in housework (Oakley 1972), and I shall consider this later in greater detail.

However the division between housework and childcare did not seem relevant to my interviews and conversations with women, because they did not make this distinction in their lives. It is all part of being a resource for others. Kate uses the phrase 'the resource called the wife'. She explained exactly what this means.

Kate:

"Being an unidentified body but generally keeping everything else ticking over."

This is one reason why the lives of men and women are so different. It is one thing to use a resource and another altogether to be the resource. Indeed as Ann Oakley points out this difference between men and women is fundamental.

"Gender differentiation between the roles of female and male is the axis of the modern family's structure... Husband and wife are not the same sort of role, nor are father and mother..." (Oakley 1972, p.61).

Because these women are at home full time they organise the house and other family members' lives. They are the servicing agencies facilitating life for the other members of the family.

With young children at home the demands are especially heavy and all these women had a young child between three and six, when this study began. Rachael describes a day which is full of chores and leaves very little time for her personal development or recreation.

LH:

"What would you say mothering includes?"

Rachael:

"I think if you catalogue it all it would be things like ironing, cooking their supper, washing up... it's just the demands they put on you by being with you all day and I don't know how you catalogue that as work. It's tiring and exhausting and it's not actually time when you can do what you want."

In reply to the same question Teresa suggests -

Teresa:

"It's like being a captive housewife. Feeling the whole time that you're in a vulnerable position because your job isn't specified. The hours aren't specified, the work's not specified."

Part of the problem are the restrictions many women feel over time and space. There is no time to develop their own interests. There is no physical space which they could claim as their own. Kate feels this very strongly.

Kate:

"I definitely like to be on my own as well. Just having one living room is a point of aggravation. I don't have any right to shut myself off."

In the home Kate has no space which is hers alone. Josephine also feels that the children and her job don't allow her any sense of space.

Josephine:

"That's one of the worst things really. I'm never without the children - there is never any time when I walk through the house and feel 'This is my house' and it's quiet and I can sit and read a book. Well occasionally I could do that in the evening but I can't do that in daylight hours."

The household chores

What these women made visible was the mundane nature of domestic servicing. This servicing involves taking responsibility for most of the household chores. They don't necessarily like it but all these women accept it as part of the job. Anna recalls a recent incident when it became clear to her that she was behaving like a waitress.

Anna:

"On Monday... the supper was in the oven and Emma and Lucy and Max all went and sat down at the table... they were all just sitting there waiting for their supper. I think I probably wait on them too much."

Hazel doesn't seem to find the role of mother and housewife unacceptable. She describes herself as 'a traditionalist' and suggests that 'it just happens' that she is better at womanly chores while Harry's skills lie in house construction and decoration.

Hazel:

"I am a traditionalist really fundamentally... it just happens that my skills are to do with things like cooking, dressmaking and so on... Harry's skills have always been building a house. When we first came here the house was in chaos. He built it and I kept order and it was a very rational and sensible breakdown of jobs."

However Hazel does not like housework. That is a source of conflict because she and Harry do not agree on the importance of tidiness and cleanliness.

Hazel:

"... it is always a potential source of conflict in that there is always for me something more important to do than housework. Housework for me comes very low on my list of priorities and extremely high on his..."

Presumably this means that housework was high on the list of things which she should undertake. Fortunately conflict has been diffused because they have found a cleaner.

Hazel:

"Life is much easier now because we have a cleaning lady who lightens the burden enormously."

Having a cleaning lady does not shift the responsibility away from the woman. The priority given to his career means he always accepts the responsibility for providing an income. In the circumstances women are

expected to provide domestic service. This does not necessarily end if women have paid employment. Josephine continues to take responsibility for domestic servicing although she works full-time. This is despite the fact that Barry is working at home and takes care of Sam in the afternoon.

Josephine:

"I still keep the mantle of responsibility for the house even though we share it more on the children. I still worry whether the housework is done, although I've got someone to clean the house... I would be the one to worry if she didn't come and I'm the one who worries about the food and the ironing and the organisation of the house generally."

What these women chose to make visible about their lives is the fatigue, the willingness to sacrifice and the tension between the love for children and the mundane life which it often entails. This is an inevitable part of making the husband's work a priority.

How was this allocation of domestic responsibility decided?

Kate suggests that the division of labour relates to finance. The man can earn more money, consequently his share of the domestic work must not interfere with his career.

Kate:

"We fit into the mould of the husband going out to work and then having a reasonable salary to live on and me staying at home, not at work, which partly we have slipped into on the assumption that his job will always have priority."

Because of this priority the relentless everyday chores are reserved by women for themselves. Some husbands contribute very little even to their own maintenance, such as ironing. Malcolm is one of these and Anna blames his working class background for his chauvinist approach to life.

LH:

"How does Malcolm help in the house?"

Anna:

"He cleans his own shoes. The trouble is he comes from a working class background. You know... 'a woman's place is in the home' and so actually he does more than his father would ever dream of doing and sometimes he does wash up. I'm being unfair in fact he does wash up occasionally."

Anna also suggests that part of Malcolm's problem is 'biological'. He does not wake up easily or function well early in the morning. For this reason Anna has to get the household organised to start the day.

Anna:

"... but he can't get up in the mornings. Every morning he always gets himself up and ready and that's it. And I get us up and breakfasted, ready and brushed... because he's hopeless in the mornings."

Most of the women in this study view themselves as a support system. Peggy certainly does: she considers her job as a housewife to include protecting Dennis from the tedium of cooking and housework.

Peggy:

"He used to cook but since we have had the children, the cooking is so boring, and he doesn't have time. He is terribly busy and I don't mind that he doesn't do the cooking. I mean I'm not desperately keen for him to rush into the kitchen and do it. Before we had children he did cook. He actually likes it. He is quite good at it."

The kind of cooking Dennis enjoys is creative and Pegg's children seem to prefer convenience foods. Also cooking every day for a family is part of the domestic treadmill and becomes routine. Peggy hates cooking convenience food for children but sees it as part of her job.

Peggy:

"It isn't interesting cooking for children. We have sausages and beans and so I do it. I do dislike doing it. I mean I hate getting

our evening meal but I don't feel someone else should be doing it. I just hate doing it because it is that time of day and I don't feel like doing it and it isn't very exciting."

Peggy also does all the shopping usually at local shops carrying home heavy bags. They used to go once a week to a large supermarket and pile the shopping in the car. However Peggy does not drive so Dennis had to participate. She now feels that this was an unjustified demand on his time and he needs the mental space for his own work.

Peggy:

"Yes, we both used to go to Sainsbury's, I don't drive. If I drove I would go. But going to Sainsbury's Saturday morning really mucked up our weekend. It made Dennis feel dreadful... I didn't think it was fair to take up his weekend doing something like that. He would go and if I said I couldn't go... I just feel I shouldn't ask him because he has got enough to do and it is actually what I consider to be my job."

Neither Peggy nor Anna involved themselves in the dialogue about equality. Rose does not claim that there is equality in her marriage but she does suggest that Chris seems to be better than many other men.

Rose:

"I think of myself as being better off with Chris than a lot of my friends. I consider that my husband does a lot more than most of my friends' husbands do. When I hear them talk about what they do and what their husbands do, I realise that I'm comparatively lucky compared to friends."

She does also say:

"He is always prepared to help."

As Ann Oakley points out the concept of 'help' is political. It does not involve a shift of responsibility from female to male. He is 'helping' with her work (Oakley 1972). The women in this study certainly saw housework as real work and just as the women interviewed by Ann Oakley they disliked it or at best felt ambivalent about it.

Housework expands in all directions

Kate does not enjoy housework and yet domesticity seems to fill her life.

Kate:

"... I found myself having no excuse for not doing all these things and yet somehow not being very good at them or particularly wanting to do them and not quite knowing what to do with the time I have in between..."

As she says, even when there is spare time she has not got enough mental space to organise herself to do anything else. Gerald, her husband, can retreat into his work even at the weekend but this is not an option which is open to Kate.

Kate:

"Whereas on a Saturday after lunch he can always say 'I have to go to work now'. There is very little room for manoeuvre. If I say on a Saturday afternoon 'Right I want to go and work now'. Well. What is the work I'm doing? What is my work? If I'm not cooking, shopping, looking after children?

Many of these women also undertake some of the heavier work around the house. Hazel supervised the builders when her house was modernised and organised all the extras which made the house comfortable.

Hazel:

"There was building work to check on and the other jobs that make the house a home."

Teresa also takes on house maintenance work.

Teresa:

"I do all the decorating. Always have."

And Janet also takes the decorating as part of her job.

Janet:

"I've just repainted the breakfast room and I'm starting on the hall."

If women take on decorating this represents a considerable saving for the family not having to pay a decorator. It also makes the possibility of paid employment recede even further for a while because there would not be time with all the other commitments involved in wife and mother's role.

Emotional commitment

Caring for children does not simply involve physical work. There is the emotional commitment to maintaining family life. Emotional servicing is time-consuming and demanding.

There are periods of time when mothering means being the resource and giving out continually. This is true of traditional mothers, employed mothers and single parent mothers. Maria is married to Martin and they have two children. He has just started a new job as a deputy head. Maria has become the resource for the family.

Maria:

"Physically I am exhausted and mentally you know. Everyone has started at a new place this term and I just feel at the moment I can't do anything other than to hold it together; to keep the food and the clothes; and the house going. I really don't feel I can do much else at the moment."

This willingness to give up your life to facilitate everybody else's life seems to be an essential ingredient of motherhood in the middle class on the Denton Estate. Jenny is prepared to be constantly available.

Jenny:

"Perhaps the important thing is that you are prepared to drop everything and arrange everything to suit them. It's like this business of going to meet them from school. As if they are saying

'I'm out all day, I want to know that this time of the day is for me'.
Then you turn up and they say 'I'm going home with (a friend).'"

This idea of being a support for the whole family is not just the prerogative of mothers in traditional two-parent families. Sandra, a single parent also sees herself as a sole support for her children.

Sandra:

"When the children collapse where can they turn to? Only to me."

Being an emotional resource means propping up the children and sorting out their problems and worries. For married women it also means listening to the husband's problems at work and giving the emotional support which seems an essential requisite of a career. Giving support to the husband, listening to his problems is part of the role of a wife.

Rachael:

"He talks about work non-stop in the evenings. I do find it boring.
Yes I do. There's nobody to listen to me."

Barbara:

"He goes on and on about his job. He's got to get it off his chest."

Helen:

"I don't get too involved but I do listen."

Being an emotional prop for the family means women must be constantly available in the traditional middle class home.

Men and women: different lives

The father's intentions may be good about sharing housework and childcare but the wife must be prepared to pick up dropped priorities if the demands of the career overwhelm him.

I asked Janet about this issue. She explains how Jeffrey's commitment to domestic work wanes as term wears on.

LH:

"Is it your feeling that Jeffrey does his share of family work?"

Janet:

"... he does his share at different times in the term. In the holidays he certainly does his share - in fact he does more than I do. When the term starts he does his share but as he gets more and more involved in the term, then he gets more and more absent-minded and then he cuts out a lot of the things."

Because he has other things on his mind his domestic commitments assume a low priority and Janet has to remind him of his chores.

Janet:

"... and then he doesn't think 'I should do that' you know. He would only do it if I actually yell at him to go and do that because he's got his mind on a hundred and one other things and unless he's bullied into doing it then he just doesn't do it spontaneously."

Undoubtedly Janet cannot allow herself to be 'absent-minded' as the term progresses. She has in fact to take up the work which Jeffrey forgets. To get her husband to remember Janet has to 'yell' and 'bully' which is very tiring and time consuming. These are her words and she describes her reminding him and organising in ways that are derogatory to herself. She could have described all this in more neutral terminology but perhaps feels rather guilty about her treatment of Jeffrey, especially as he works so hard in his career.

For these women their investment is not only in motherhood. It is in the male career. Putting his career as a priority in her life means being prepared to take over when things go wrong. There are different standards for what men and women can expect from life. For example illness can be a very different experience for the husband or the wife. Kate had pneumonia.

Kate:

"I was doubled up in agony and the doctor said he (Gerald) had to take the day off to stop with the children. Yes. Then he ran round and got other people to look after them."

Fortunately Kate's illness was during the school holidays.

Kate:

"I went into hospital and it was half-term, so that was alright..."

If Gerald is ill Kate is there.

Kate:

"If men are ill there is the assumption that the resource called your wife will cook your meals and run up and down stairs for you."

But like Rose, Kate still believes that she is better off than other women especially her sister-in-law.

Kate:

"I think I don't do too badly - we actually work it out quite well compared to how my brother treats his wife."

This is because Gerald is affable and does help out with the childcare. He treats Kate with kindness which is an improvement on the bad temper of her brother. However like most women on the Denton Estate Kate is dependent upon the goodwill of her husband. If he refuses his help Kate has to do all the work herself.

Mothering can expand in any direction so that it can take up all day, every day, from getting the family organised in the morning, housework, shopping and childcare through the day and cooking and giving attention to the husband in the evening. The division of labour which underlies the organisation of mothering involves complete commitment while children are of pre-school age and a suppression of other desires for paid work or a

non-child centred social life. Deviations from complete commitment can engender guilt and anxiety.

3) Guilt and Anxiety

Feeling inadequate and feeling guilty were frequently raised as topics during the period of research. These middle class mothers are devoted to a certain quality of care and attention. The mother knows that she should aspire to the highest standards and if she falls below them guilt is the result.

Guilt and the full-time mother

Peggy felt guilty because she let her son Simon sit and play while she got on with other tasks.

Peggy:

"I always let Simon (her son) sit and play - I used to feel guilty about it because I used to get on with things and he would sit there and play like a little angel."

Peggy believes that this neglect on her part affected his development and he was late in starting to talk.

"I always think that was perhaps why he talked much later because I didn't spend so much time talking with him."

Peggy also has a general sense of guilt if she has been irritable with the children or not lived up to her own high standards.

Peggy:

"I feel guilty if I feel I have behaved badly with the children or done what I feel I ought not to have done."

On top of this there are her lapses as a wife which cause her anxiety. She suggests that she should be more understanding.

Peggy:

"I sometimes feel bad about how I behave to Dennis. Occasionally I feel I have behaved badly to him. You know one gets upset about things and then I think about them and I feel well really I should be more understanding - that's about the only thing that does make me feel bad, really bad."

Peggy has been at home for 12 years devoting herself to family life. Despite this commitment she has a sense of inadequacy and finds many reasons to reproach herself.

Anna also is a traditional mother who has stayed at home for many years. However she suggests that she is not really on top of the job. She feels guilty that she is disorganised and that perhaps her children have a less stimulating life than others in the area. She manages to convey her feelings of inadequacy and low self esteem.

Anna:

"There are some people, they are just fantastic - so creative and they do creative things with their children... I can't make wonderful objects out of string and yoghurt pots... my children just play with toys."

She says that she enjoys staying at home but wishes that other women did not set quite such high standards.

Anna:

"I like being at home, the trouble is, I really enjoy being at home and I'm hopeless at it... I think that I am good at just wasting time. I am totally inefficient, it's incredible... I wish in a way that there weren't all these marvellous people around, doing marvellous things. I would feel much happier if everyone was as sloppy as I am."

One way to keep the guilt at bay is to be a 'proper mother'. As part of being a proper mother Diane did not want her children to go to a playgroup.

Diane:

"I just felt they ought to be at home with me and I'd make a proper job of it - till they went to school."

This feeling is not shared by most other mothers. The children go to playgroup when they are three or even younger. Even while she was married Tess was relieved when her children went to the local playgroup.

Tess:

"Actually I couldn't wait to get them to playgroup. Dreadful isn't it?"

In a culture where women are supposed to enjoy the company of small children they believe, like Tess that they are 'dreadful' if they really do not.

Guilt and the employed mother

Single parents often expressed guilt because they have to struggle against the ideal of the nuclear family with the mother at home. Tess is a teacher and cannot be at home with the children.

Tess:

"They come home and sometimes I'm not in until five. And I'm very tired. I just agonise over what is happening to them - I haven't been a wonderful mother - not even adequate."

Another single parent, Ellen, is guilty about the emotional turmoil her children suffered during her divorce.

Ellen:

"Everything has settled down now but of course I feel terrible that they've been through that experience (the divorce). We kept talking everything over and I know that really helped."

Few of the single parents saw a positive side to life with a mother alone. Instead they anxiously spoke about the traumas which their children had to survive and during the research single parents often apologised for not giving their children a normal life.

Tess:

"I know they would be better off if I'd only kept my marriage together."

Ellen:

"Well of course I feel guilty about the upheaval in their lives."

Sandra:

"They took it very badly and it was my fault. My decision. I put my life first. In retrospect perhaps I was wrong."

Traditional mothers have the comfort of feeling that society reinforces their view of themselves as having undertaken the correct lifestyle. Deviation from the ideal causes the non-conforming mother considerable anxiety. This is the case with married women who are in paid employment. They feel guilty because they are not at home, especially if they have young pre-school children.

Josephine, who went out to work when Sam was three, explains how she feels.

Josephine:

"I really did feel guilty at first, that I was leaving them with Barry. I just feel guilty that it wasn't me at home with them..."

Rose says she always feels guilty now she is teaching - guilty about leaving her children, especially when her youngest was only two years old.

Rose:

"Inbuilt guilt. Yes I've got inbuilt guilt. Chris (husband) is very good about it but I still feel guilty."

Brigit minded Joe, Rose's youngest child when Rose first went back to work. Brigit believes that maternal guilt is worse for a mother in paid employment because working mothers may feel that they owe something to their children and have to somehow make up for being away at work.

Brigit:

"I reckon they get a bit spoilt sometimes, when they go to childminders. It's just that the mother has the feeling of owing them something when you see them because you are not with them all day. When you are with the child all day they wear down your tolerance... (and)... you feel there is nothing wrong in saying 'Oh shut up and go outside', but you don't feel you can do that with a child you haven't been with all morning somehow."

Feeling like a failure

Jenny is familiar with maternal guilt, and told a story about how full-time mothering often makes her feel unsuccessful and inadequate.

Jenny:

"I play badminton once a month and I had already had a bad day with the children so I was irritable with them and you then feel terribly guilty afterwards. I lost at badminton and I came out and said 'I'm not going to play badminton again. I'm just going to have a drink. I don't want another thing to fail at'."

Jenny suggests that these feelings of inadequacy are an inevitable part of motherhood because it is not clear if you are doing the right thing. She suggests that these problems do not arise for secretaries (for example) where the job is specified. A mother has no clear job description so anxiety can arise about whether the mother is doing all that is necessary.

Jenny:

"I think one of the things about bringing up children is the lack of feeling that you're doing things right. It's so easy to be a secretary well or a teacher (well a teacher is not quite as easy) but I still think it's easier than bringing up children."

Finding support

What support there is comes mainly from other women, discovering problems in common.

Rachael:

"But I think you get support from friends just because if you sit round and talk to other people you find that they all have the same doubts and the same problems and you are not so isolated."

These groups usually meet over coffee for informal conversation. Here mothers found an opportunity to discuss their child's development.

Diane:

"You sit down and you have a cup of coffee... it used to be all about the children and babies' vaccinations and goodness knows what else, and how many ounces of milk he's had..."

Teresa misses these coffee mornings now the children are older.

Teresa:

"I like chatting to other women in a similar situation. I do feel a bit lonely now. I miss that lovely feeling when the kids are little and you've got lots of friends and you've got identical interests."

These sessions with friends also help to define the job and reassure the mother that she is on the right track. Jenny seeks reassurance from her husband Alex but, although he gives it when asked, he does not volunteer praise and support.

Jenny:

"Alex gives it (reassurance) when it's demanded but I don't think he is aware of how much I need it..."

Nor does Jenny believe that Alex needs reassuring about his role as a father. He does not analyse his reactions to the children as Jenny does.

LH:

"Do you think Alex has the same doubts about his ability as a parent?"

Jenny:

"I don't think so."

LH:

"As a father?"

Jenny:

"... I don't think he questions his reactions to them like I probably would."

Jenny is aware that fatherhood is not subject to the same prescriptions as motherhood. So he does not need support as a father in the same way as she does as a mother. The support which women do get from one another can be emotional or practical but it is usually support to be a certain kind of mother, and when the media and all the social institutions reinforce this view of motherhood it can be a force which is difficult to reject. I shall discuss this again in the summary of this section.

4) Decisions about Staying at Home or Going to Paid Work

Rose expresses the conflict many women feel when forced to choose between having children and paid employment.

Rose:

"I do love them both very much and I just enjoy being with them. Having said that I am looking for a job - it doesn't make sense does it?"

Wanting both children and [interesting] employment does not 'make sense' in this section of society because these are still seen as exclusive alternatives for women. Because the care of small children is seen as

women's duty, wanting paid employment at the same time gives rise to conflict for working mothers.

Alice Walker in her work on black authors tells the story of Adah, the central character in Buchi Emechta's book 'Second Class Citizen'. She describes Adah's life and the way she combines being a mother and an author.

"The ambition of her life is to write a novel, and on the first day she has her oldest child in a nursery and her youngest two down for their naps, she begins writing it. In this way, she integrates the profession of writer into the cultural concept of mother/worker that she retains from Ibo society. Just as the African mother had traditionally planted crops, pounded maize, and done her washing with her baby strapped to her back, so Adah can write a novel with her children playing in the same room." (Walker 1984, p.69).

In our society children are not integrated into the working life of our society they are cared for at home by mothers or in nurseries or playgroups. Motherhood usually means taking full responsibility for the child except on those occasions when the father will do so. This continues until the child goes to a playgroup which is part of life for most children on the Denton Estate after the age of three years. Staying at home often precludes other activities except for housework. This exclusion of women from paid work or creative work because they have small children is not the case in all other cultures. All but one of the women (including single parent mothers) in this study have stayed at home between five and twelve years, at one time or another. Only Brenda went straight back to work when Ellie was six months old. Staying at home with young children was a strong belief for many of the women.

Peggy:

"I actually disapprove of leaving children with other people... I do actually think that if you commit yourself to looking after them you should do it yourself."

Diane:

"I don't think it's right to leave them - not when they are so young."

Carole:

"I felt that quite strongly about staying at home until they go to school. I cannot see why people have children if they don't want to spend time with them when they can, which is until they go to school."

Women should remain at home with children. The joy of childrearing will be its own reward. Josephine also stayed at home with the children until her younger child was three. She saw that as being part of a contract with her husband, because she had wanted to have the children.

Josephine:

"I said to him 'look it will be my job' and I did give up my full-time job and I did see it as my full-time job."

Barry had said he did not want children at that time. This aspect of staying at home is clearly linked with taking responsibility for the children and seeing it as 'her job'. When the baby and toddler stage was over for the second child, Josephine felt able to go out to teach again.

Rose was also very clear that motherhood would involve staying at home.

Rose:

"I knew that I would work for a little while, then I would have my children."

Women's employment

Working and then leaving work for childcare is very much part of the programme of these women's lives. What were they doing before childcare took them over?

Jenny was a teacher.

Jenny:

"I trained at the Tech - did my BA. I met Alex while I was a student. I worked as an EFL teacher."

Kate was a graduate in sociology who worked in a bookshop.

Kate:

"You could hardly call it a career."

Meg was a chemist.

Meg:

"I did research on animals. I was glad to leave because the ethics of it worried me."

Maria, Rose, Brigit, Teresa, Mary and Anna had all been teachers before marriage. I could find no solicitors, no doctors, no university lecturers among the women. Either the Denton Estate does not draw the dual career family because the houses are lacking sufficient prestige, or since these women are constantly working they could not become part of the community I was studying. The main current occupational category for these traditional mothers was ex-teacher and now housewife.

Few of the married women with young children are in paid employment. Nearly all the women I talked to had spent at least five years working in the home out of full-time employment.

Single parent mothers

Of the single parent mothers, two had been housewives until their youngest child was five. Two went back to paid work soon after the child was weaned. For single parent mothers, paid work is a necessity, and they cannot maintain too much ambivalence.

Ellen:

"I work to support my children."

Sandra:

"I'm the provider."

Tess:

"Sometimes I feel I want to work. Sometimes I want to just potter around all day and I can't because I have to work. I've got to have a proper job to support the children but I get so tired."

Other single parents work because they want to.

Brenda:

"I hated staying at home."

Sandra:

"I was bored at home. I'd already been at home for five years."

The problems of Paid employment

Of the traditional mothers, many expressed a dislike of paid work. Some suggested that giving up paid work was not necessarily difficult. Janet was a PE teacher, but she had stopped working just before she adopted Denise.

Janet:

"I chose not to work before we had kids because I felt that I was doing something that I wasn't really enjoying."

Of course paid employment is not necessarily interesting and stimulating and even if it is, it may also be stressful and competitive, and may not reflect the kind of lifestyle which these women would choose for themselves. Janet explains this:

Janet:

"I can't think of any job that I would want to do which is paid. There are lots of jobs I would want to do that aren't paid. If someone would pay me to be an artist at home that would be fine."

There are few part-time jobs available and a full-time job may appear overwhelming to women who already have so many demands on their time and energy. These attitudes about paid employment outside the home also reflect a reality about childcare and housework in middle class families. As I discussed in the previous section there is a non-negotiable minimum workload which does take up a lot of time. Proper middle class family life may rely upon a mother at home. She provides quality childcare but also manages the lifestyle which middle class life demands. She supervises the home decor, organises any entertaining which has to be done and takes charge of planning such events as holidays or outings. This is extra to childcare and housework. Paid employment and childcare may prove too taxing. Hazel was a social worker but was glad to leave work to be a resource for the family.

Hazel:

"Until we came here I was working and Ruth went to a babysitter. We came when Ruth was three and I was really too glad to give up work from her point of view, the family point of view... I was very glad to be at home."

She wanted to give Ruth more attention and she wanted to get the new house straight.

Jenny went back to work after the birth of her first child and disdained the idea of being a mother at home. It became more difficult with each child. She has been at home for 12 years (by 1986) and has four children. Women who are quite enthusiastic about working after they have

children, often retreat into the home because going out to work may be a very difficult option.

Jenny:

"Yes, I don't mind staying at home at all now. I like it more now than I thought I would. When Kathy was born I was determined to go back to work which I did within a month of her being born, and the thought of being one of these mothers who just stayed at home with the children was abhorrent, but I got more used to it."

Jenny thought that she would rush back to work at the first possible moment but now she is not quite so sure.

Jenny:

"I used to think I would go back to work immediately my youngest was at school and I now feel I want a little time to myself, first just to do the sort of things you can't do when children are around... sewing and things like that."

Peggy was also glad to give up work. She had cut down to four and a half days a week even before she was pregnant for the first time.

Peggy:

"I think I was quite glad to give up work, it wasn't very stimulating. We had been married some time before we had Ben and I suppose I wanted to have a child. I had given up half a day. I worked four and a half days because I found that I didn't have time to do things at home so I suppose I was prepared to give it up and concentrate on the home."

Anna was a teacher before she had her children and is rather reluctant to return to work.

Anna:

"I prefer being at home because I can't face going out to work... I enjoy it at home."

She points to a problem for many women about working. She would have two jobs instead of one.

Anna:

"Malcolm has been pushing me to get a job for years, which is probably one reason why I like staying at home!"

LH:

"Would he be around more, do you think, if you did get a job?"

Anna:

"Oh no. That's probably why I don't. I mean I don't think he'd like services any less!"

Anna does not see an increased workload as being to her advantage. With young children to care for, these women already have one taxing, time-consuming job. If she went out to work she would be competing with her husband for resources in the house. As it is, she provides the resources and that struggle is resolved. In Anna's case it is clear that she believes that Malcolm would not be prepared to take a greater share of domestic work. She would have to go out to paid work, provide all the resources for the family and have none herself.

For this reason Jenny doesn't work outside the home, because she, herself would need support which would not be available.

Jenny:

"I think if I did a job full-time I would come home and want them to pamper me, whereas when they have been at school all day, they want someone to sit and talk to them."

These issues were also uppermost in Josephine's thoughts when she decided to return to teaching when her youngest child was three. Paid work and motherhood is a tiring combination and Josephine was not sure she would be able to cope.

Josephine:

"I've had to think to myself 'can I go back to work? Can I stand it? Will I be able to cope? Can I take all the pressures that are going to be on me?'"

Josephine did go back to work and it was easier for her than for other mothers because Barry works at home and was able to take care of the three-year-old after morning at the nursery.

However Josephine finds that she is over-stretched and rarely has an opportunity to rest and relax.

Josephine:

"Because I have had a lot of pressure on me, going out to work and keeping the house on - I've never had a rest."

However she has now begun to think of her work as her career. She is in charge of language development in a junior school.

Josephine:

"I didn't really see what I was doing last year in my temporary job (as a career) I saw that as rather fun and getting me out of the house, things like that. Now because I've become permanent and up a scale I suddenly begin to see this as a career again... particularly the nature of this job, because it's such a specialised job and it's dealing with remedial work and it's quite responsible..."

She might take time off to have another baby but believes that she will remain on the career ladder.

Josephine:

"... I can really see it as a stepping stone - I mean it may be a stepping stone that I won't make use of until after I have had another baby - but it quite clearly is..."

Supportive husbands

An essential aspect of Josephine's return to work was Barry's support.

Josephine:

"Barry has to take over the responsibility for caring that much more. He really loved them and was interested in them when they were babies but he never really had to be involved... I have always seen it as a

mantle of responsibility that I actually took off and put on to him last September."

The mantle of responsibility only relates to afternoon childcare but this gives Josephine enough freedom to concentrate on work while she is there. After school she again assumes responsibility for childcare and cooking.

Josephine:

"Barry works in the evening. If he tries to cook he stares at two carrots and an onion for hours trying to work out how to convert them into something edible."

For those women who are employed outside the home, their husband's support is essential. They do not necessarily demand increased help with the housework but without moral support and encouragement from the husband the problem of two jobs is extremely difficult. This support is not always immediately forthcoming.

Hazel started working three mornings a week in an antique shop when her youngest child was six years old. The transition from mother at home to working woman has been quite difficult, because Harry views Hazel as the traditional wife at home, and the weight of normality reflects this view. Hazel:

"He (Harry) is finally coming to terms with me as a non-domestic person and it's been a very awkward transition in many ways."

She changed her image by delegating responsibility for some housework to a cleaning lady.

Hazel:

"I have made that break finally and it's interesting that getting a cleaning lady and an automatic washing machine and a three-mornings-a-week job has been enough to effect the transition. I've obviously been building up to it for a long time, but now all my family are aware of me as a working girl."

For a number of years Hazel has been working at home for a publisher, indexing and proof-reading, but leaving the house means she has a real job.

Hazel:

"The fact that I've been doing indexing upstairs for years is entirely besides the point. I actually have to leave the house and go out and be at a job for a certain time."

Hazel maintains that she had never been 'housebound' and has been involved in many other activities outside the family, so Harry could not have been totally unprepared for the change.

Hazel:

"I've never been housebound... I have always done lots of things.

However periodically Hazel decides she has to go back to being a proper housewife.

Hazel:

"Occasionally I drop everything and decide I am going to be good and stay at home, but I can't keep it up for more than about three months and before I know where I am I'm out organising something, or someone again."

'Being good' of course means staying at home. The idea that the 'good wife' is one that stays at home is a powerful social image although Hazel distances herself from this by her ironic suggestions that she is 'being good'. However Harry seems prepared to support Hazel to go out to paid employment. She doesn't demand that he undertakes more routine housework.

Hazel:

"He doesn't do any cooking or cleaning or anything like that."

Yet Hazel suggests that they get on better because she is working.

Hazel:

"He is prepared to support me to work and our relationship has been a lot better."

Josephine feels that Barry accepts her as a working woman, and that he always has. She could not have lived with him under any other circumstances.

Josephine:

"I would be absolutely outraged to think that he would object to me being myself. I would not have accepted that somebody would object to me expressing myself in what ever way I could."

Rose gets support from Chris when she is working. He is trying to reorganise his work schedule so that he will take the children to school and to nursery in the mornings.

Rose:

"Chris is very good about it. He's perfectly happy to try and reorganise his hours. He's supposed to start at 8.30 in the morning, but he said he's going to try to change his hours so he starts at 9.00 and he'll take Joe to nursery in the mornings for me."

The end phrase 'for me' is rather telling. Rose admits that she accepts the childcare as her job, even when they both work.

Rose:

"When I am working I do feel I am still responsible for the children."

But she can rely on some practical support from Chris when she is employed as he increases his periods of childcare support. Or perhaps what she can rely on is that when she is not working she doesn't get much practical support at all with domestic chores.

Rose:

"When I'm not working he does less. There's no doubt about that."

Childcare Problems

A major issue for all working mothers is to arrange childcare while the children are young. These issues also concern Kate, who is a cellist. She loves to play but cannot decide how many engagements to take on because the organisation of childcare is quite difficult.

Kate:

"I'm still doing quite a bit of music and that's always been my thing - whether to do more of it and take it more seriously or not. Gerald has always been pretty good over that because it's involved me going down to London to stay a bit. We've always agreed pretty much that when something came up I would do it."

When Kate does commit herself to a performance she often finds the childcare arrangements very stressful.

Kate:

"But when it actually came to it, it would often be so exhausting for everybody and it would mean me making a lot of arrangements for other people to look after the children that I would wonder if it was worth it."

These problems arise most acutely for the single parent mothers whose lives are a tangled web of childcare arrangements if they have small children. Sandra described her childcare arrangements as 'a nightmare'. She always worried in case something goes wrong. Brenda has a home help who collects the children. Tess relies on a neighbour to pick up her children. Having returned from paid work most mothers come home to household chores and cooking the evening meal. The working day may finally end at nine or ten at night only to begin again first thing in the morning. However single parent mothers often have to work and cannot engage in the debates which concern married mothers when they consider taking a paid job.

Self-Esteem

Although Josephine has stayed at home for a few years she has not welcomed the image of just being a wife and mother.

Josephine:

"I didn't want to just be 'somebody' at home, functioning in no other capacity than in the house. I've never been attracted to housework or cooking or anything."

Rachael has given up work to stay with her children but is very aware that this has created tensions for her and for other mothers.

Rachael:

"I suppose there is not an ideal way out. It has to be something that you try and work out, I think for your own self respect. I think you have to work out something that is as suitable for a woman to be the one that is at home as it is for the one who is getting out doing the job."

Rachael implies that being at home with children is low status and consequently self respect suffers. There is inequality between the positions of husband and wife. All these middle class husbands have some status through their work, and they earn money. Women at home have neither of these advantages.

Staying at home for Kate means that she feels she is the junior partner in the marriage.

Kate:

"I'm constantly in the position of feeling that I am playing second fiddle, that if I want to do something I have to arrange it with him first."

This seems to relate to his position as wage earner and hers as wife and dependant.

Kate:

"He has always earned more than me and the question never arose about who would stay at home."

This situation of dependency and some sense of isolation can lead women to depression. Even women who were convinced that they should be at home with children got depressed. Carole was one of these. She did not believe in taking a job while her children were young.

Carole:

"To get a job that took me out of the home while they were at home with me, again brought me back to the point of taking on this responsibility and worry and all the rest of it if you are not going to get the joy of it by sitting around."

But not all of this experience was 'joy'. Carole was isolated in a small village.

Carole:

"I was in a village away from even the centre of activity, so it was a mile and a half walk to get my shopping and then a mile and a half back again."

Being limited by the demands of small children and rather isolated housing pushed Carole into a state of depression.

Carole:

"There was a period when it got me down, but a friend with five children was very supportive. Once Will had really stopped feeding and I could get them both out and about I didn't feel so down any more. Not at all. (Will stopped 'feeding' at nine months.)"

A belief that women should stay at home is often denied by an emotional response within women, which demands more from life than just the company of a small baby and the routine that imposes. Although they want life to include motherhood, traditional definitions are quite constricting. Conflicts surfaced for all these women during the early months of their

children's lives. Despite the strength of this commitment neither Peggy or Carole found the reality of life at home easy to tolerate. The contradictions here are clear. The language leads in one direction but the emotions may lead in another direction altogether.

Peggy herself did not find the commitment very easy. After her first child she was very depressed and that lasted for a year or so. She attributes the depression to resenting staying at home.

Peggy:

"I was very miserable at first I must admit."

LH:

"Did you suffer from depression?"

Peggy:

"Yes, it was a long depression, it lasted about a year afterwards."

LH:

"But you went on to have another two children so it worked out?"

Peggy:

"Well, it got better as he got older - there was a big gap so I got over it I suppose, but he did get better as he got older. I think I just resented being at home. But I adjusted rather more slowly than some people perhaps."

Peggy holds in her memory the conflict between her commitment to 'staying at home' and the understanding that it made her very miserable.

Conflict is generated because the identity is not simple. Needs and desires have a long history. The sudden acquisition of the identity of mother usually involves the repression of other identities, more familiar. The sense of powerlessness and depression may be temporary although Peggy has rather lost interest in herself over a long period of time.

Peggy:

"I keep thinking I will start thinking about me, but I put that off you see because Nicholas is a bit young, he is only four yet. Yes, I suppose so, I have really lost interest in myself."

However Peggy says she does not just see herself as a mother.

Peggy:

"I don't identify myself with motherhood as such. I just think of myself as me."

Janet agrees with that.

Janet:

"Well, I don't see myself primarily as a parent at all, although the past five years have been very engrossed in that."

Rose has been teaching again since her youngest child was two and a half and she suggests that paid employment gives a boost to the confidence.

Rose:

"A job opens life up a bit and it makes you realise how stale you've become. I'd certainly become very stale. I'd also lost a lot of confidence."

The decision to take a job is related to the woman's sense of her own identity and where the emotional and physical investment is to be made in her life. The idea of working in paid employment may be quite threatening to women who've invested their energies in total mothering.

Although she is now in full-time employment Rose understands all the dilemmas that other women on the estate must face. Once a woman is out of the job market she needs considerable confidence to break back in.

Rose:

"Another danger is that you get trapped into the idea of being at home and you get a little bit introverted I think, unless you are quite an unusual sort of person, and you lose your confidence."

Once caught in this situation it is easy to solve the problem of what to do with your life by having babies.

Rose:

"You get trapped into being at home and having children and as one child gets older you think 'Oh I'll have another one' or 'I'm feeling broody' or something like that. I do think that's a danger - just having babies for something to do."

Peggy explains her decision to have a third child very much in those terms.

Peggy:

"Do you know I actually think it was putting off deciding what to do with myself, partly that. Partly because I felt that was too cosy and I would quite have liked to have had a girl because it would have made a change from boys."

The more children in the family the greater the organisational problems for women and having three children successfully distances women from the possibility of paid employment which many women find threatening.

Returning to paid work

However when all the children leave for school, then for some women comes the problem of what to do next. The problem cannot be permanently deferred although starting paid work again at 40 or 45 is very difficult.

After 12 years at home with three children getting a job presents Peggy with problems.

Peggy:

"I'll be 40 in November you see, that's quite old really - I don't feel any older now than I suppose I did when I was 20 but it's quite old for getting retraining and things and there is nothing I really want to do when I think about it."

But when she considered it longer she decided that she would be interested in teaching, but would need retraining and realises that this is not a hopeful prospect.

Peggy:

"... actually I'd quite like to teach again but - I haven't taught for 17 years... and I've no illusions that I would be a good candidate after that gap. They are not retraining people like me because they don't need them."

All these conflicts over work are more difficult with the current high levels of unemployment; indeed how high the levels really are not known, as married women trying to return to the job market rarely register as unemployed and are not therefore reflected in the unemployment statistics.

Dennis had tried to encourage Peggy back to work.

Peggy:

"He said to me today, 'what are you going to do next?' I think he thinks that I ought to really think about my future and find something I really like doing. I don't think he minds what it is. I mean I think he would be quite happy if I sold plants - it's not the money. He thinks that I will be bored if I don't do something."

For these women, attitudes to work are closely bound up with ideas about motherhood and staying at home with the children. Most women on this estate have been at home for long periods - years in many cases. They do not all agree about the desirability of that, but the economics of the situation usually conspire to keep the woman at home even if she would prefer to work.

Kate sees part-time work as a solution. She suggests that total motherhood is stressful and draining.

Kate:

"I quite enjoy (children's) company for a short while but very much within limits... I would much rather spend... half the day out of it doing something completely different with adults and half the day with

him. The time I was with him was limited but it was a much better state."

But it is always possible to opt out of the struggle for a paid job by having more children. Rose admits that she is tempted.

Rose:

"I still from time to time think I might (have another baby) but it's only when I'm bored. It's when I think 'Oh what shall I do next' and there are no jobs being advertised and at the times when I'm feeling pressurised if I'm thinking 'Oh God. Shall I apply for a job or shall I have a baby?' It's the easy option really. I think it's harder to go out to work and bring up a family but I think it's more satisfying."

Rose has made her decision. That decision will mean a double workload and an exhausting life. Many other women have settled for the other alternative. The women who are now expecting third and fourth children, have made a decision which sorts out their lives for the next five years so that the conflict between home and work recedes further and further. Competing with men for resources outside at work or inside the home is often too difficult to contemplate. Being at home without a young child to justify a woman's existence is also experienced as a pressure. Therefore third, fourth, fifth children keep the maternal role viable for as long as women are fertile and their husbands earn sufficient money to afford the ever-increasing family.

Single parent mothers do not have any choice but to take on paid work and accept their role as provider, and this is perhaps a great difference between them and the traditional mother at home who sees her role as nurturer rather than provider.

Summary

For many of these women staying at home with small children is a decision which involves a number of contradictions which are not easy to resolve. Depression and feelings of low self-esteem are some aspects of the experience of childcare for many women. This is supported by the work of Prout and Prendergast (1980) who talked to numbers of schoolgirls about their images of parenthood.

They found the pupils spontaneously mentioning depression and isolation when describing their mothers' lives.

"Most children's accounts were dominated by what we have called the negative aspects of motherhood - for example isolation, boredom and depression." (Prout and Prendergast 1980, p.519).

However when generalising about motherhood pupils would repress their own knowledge in favour of an ideal of proper mothering. The girls in this sample did not have alternative views of motherhood to fall back on. All the sample saw motherhood as an 'inevitable destiny for women'.

"Bearing and rearing children as women's obvious natural and almost necessary future was very powerful." (op. cit.).

Prout and Prendergast draw attention to the divide in pupils' knowledge between the ideal of motherhood and the reality which they see around them. This is also an aspect of motherhood on the Denton Estate. Despite many experiences to the contrary a certain ideal view of motherhood is justified and lived by many women. Whatever contradictions the traditional group of mothers may experience they become part of the hidden negotiations of marriage. It is motherhood and the acceptance of the identity of 'mother' which makes this lifestyle acceptable. These women accept the contradictions inherent in motherhood when they come to terms with staying

at home and what that really means. Accepting the socially sanctioned model of 'mother' often involves depression and low self-esteem, but women accept it because motherhood demands it, at least for a period of time.

Of course these women do not have to live in this way. There are other models of motherhood which can be considered. However motherhood in the middle class especially on the Denton Estate often follows this pattern. It is easy to sink into this 'normality' meaning that most other women with young children in this area are living in the same way. In theory there are other possible lifestyles but in this area they involve negotiating with or rejecting what is constantly assumed to be women's major task - a full-time wife and mother especially for young children.

All these women have internalised expectations of motherhood which are reflected in the institutions of our society. The health service, social services, the education system, the legal system and many more, are all underpinned by a view of women as a certain kind of mother. When the media (television, magazines) also reinforce this view of motherhood it becomes a force which is difficult to reject. Of course some mothers do reject this model of motherhood but as middle class mothers these women have accepted economic dependency on men and its consequent commitment to a kind of childcare which is based on the mother's constant presence.

At the present time, this group of traditional mothers on the Denton Estate apparently do not feel that the price is too high. In this middle class group, relative affluence cushions the family against the sharp end of recession. The support network for women at home, of coffee mornings and mothers' groups, means that there is escape from the house, and reinforcement from women who have made similar choices.

5) Her Relationship with Him

Underlying parenthood and family life is the central relationship of marriage. Marriage in this community is an asymmetrical relationship in that men and women live very different lives. It was easy to ask women why they got married and receive credible replies. It was difficult to ask men. They turned the question into a joke or seemed rather embarrassed. This may be partly because of being interviewed by a woman. For married women their current explanations for marriage seemed to centre upon security and normality and underneath lie the financial incentives which still make marriage a necessity for women. Most relationships in this community have followed a traditional pattern, courtship, marriage and children and finding security. Underpinning marriage in our society is the pervasive image of romantic love as the main basis for a lifelong union between men and women. This romantic attachment ideally has the resilience to withstand changing life events and to last the life-time of both spouses.

Security and finding an identity

But interestingly none of these women mentioned 'love' as a reason for marriage. It was security that sprang to mind ten years after the event, and the sense of living out expectations - especially parental expectations.

Anna explains about security. She did not feel self-sufficient enough to travel alone, or to live alone.

Anna:

"When we went to Africa I had wanted to go abroad before, but I couldn't have gone on my own. I haven't got the inner resources. I am not self-sufficient enough. And even if there is someone there to

argue with, know what I mean, it is the security. As I often say I married for security."

Helen married for many reasons - security was one of them and finding an identity.

Helen:

"I definitely did the secure thing. Both my sisters married very young, 19 and 20. I acquired security of marriage with children... perhaps security isn't the word, having a secure identity."

In our society being somebody's wife and somebody's mother is a secure identity for a woman. Marriage is thought to provide emotional and economic stability.

Parental influence

Some of these attitudes may come from parents, and Kate was strongly influenced by her father, who expected women to work only until they married.

Kate:

"I was well aware when I was still at school of my father's attitudes towards women... you know, after you left school you filled in your time until you got married... I think I always started off with that attitude. I'm sure I would never have agreed with it but I certainly didn't react strongly at the time. I did exactly what he expected."

The hopes and desires of the individual and social and cultural expectations merge because it is reasonable to desire those things in life which are most likely to be available. Meg says that although she followed a traditional path she really did want to get married and have children.

Meg:

"I've done basic things that I always felt I'd wanted. I didn't actually just sort of grab the first man that I could find. I did actually quite want to get married. I definitely did want to have children. I know."

Peggy sees herself in retrospect as fulfilling her mother's wishes.

Speaking about her mother she says:

Peggy:

"... and what she wanted for us, what her ambitions were for us were to get married and have children and that's what she wanted and interestingly enough that's what she's got."

Peggy also suggests that she has become like her own mother.

Peggy:

"I suppose he (Dennis) is not like my father but I am a little bit like my mother - I don't like to be but I am whether one likes it or not, I'm like her in some ways - it isn't miles apart."

Although Peggy maintains that she does not get on well with her mother, her influence is obviously discernible to Peggy herself.

Janet sees her father's influence in her life. Jeffrey reminded her of her father.

Janet:

"My father was easy-going, loveable, trustworthy. When I met him (Jeffrey) I knew I could trust him. That's why I married him."

This is also an explanation about wanting to feel secure in marriage.

Jenny suggests that images of family life are very strong and once she met Alex they helped to move her towards marriage and motherhood.

Jenny:

"I wanted to have children and to have a nice home. I don't really know why those things exactly. I suppose it's emotional - it's held up to you as what you should want."

Having married, the kind of relationship that develops depends on the personality and experience of individuals. The example of parents continues to set the pattern for Hazel's married life. Her parents were from very different backgrounds but their marriage survived, despite their

differences. Hazel looks back at her parents' marriage and reflects on the commitment they both had to make it work, despite many fundamental conflicts.

Hazel:

"I was conscious of a conflict between them, that of a very different approach to society."

She suggests that her parents were committed to keep the marriage going.

Hazel:

"Underlying the fact that my mother's marriage survived... is the very profound feeling of the necessity actually to keep the show on the road for the sake of the children."

This is reflected in her own marriage.

Hazel:

"I am sure that has carried through into my relationship with Harry."

Developing the relationship

This commitment included monogamy, which Hazel sees as a vital aspect of marriage.

Hazel:

"Having made the decision to get married we did it with a very clear understanding that it would be an exclusive relationship in the sense that there would be no other, we would not have any other liaisons elsewhere because we both felt logically or otherwise, that it was important to do this in order to maintain the trust necessary to keep something like a 20 or 30-year relationship going successfully. It's not something that we speak about. It's something that's implicit."

Carole has a close relationship with Raymond and suggests that this is because they both care. They therefore check on how the other person is feeling and coping.

Carole:

"I think the key of the matter is we constantly - we both care... But we are constantly talking about 'do you want to do this? Shall I do it?'"

Carole says that neither of them has changed and that they both accept each other as they are and yet the relationship is changing as the children grow up.

Carole:

"I mean, I know I am rather lazy and indolent about things like washing up... because I don't adore it very much. But then I never have, before we got married I never have either... and he knew what I was like. We both accept that neither of us has changed in that way, but we just know that we must both be careful because our lives are changing now the children are getting older."

Coping with changes in domestic situations may also mean coping with changes in the relationship. Anna used to spend more time with her husband before he changed his job.

Anna:

"This is the first time in our married life he has not come home for lunch and I believe that lunch is very important because that's the time you sit and talk about all the little things."

This has meant that they do not have such a continuous relationship now they no longer meet at midday. Malcolm is also noticing the difference.

Anna:

"... now he's noticing it. He says now, we don't do anything together. Well I'm sure what he actually means is he doesn't know what little things are going on."

She also points out how children often change a relationship. The parents can no longer find time to spend together.

Anna:

"I don't know about the lovers bit but we are quite good friends. Oh yes, and that's one of the things he has found most difficult with

children, is that there is much less time to do the things that he likes. That we like doing together."

For other women the struggle comes not in trying to maintain a close relationship but in accepting that there is not going to be one. Jenny finds this depressing. She and Alex have drifted apart over the years.

Jenny:

"It's just sad how lives diverge in a way. You know you start off as students doing things together and end up leading different lives."

Josephine has accepted the distance which exists between her and Barry. They almost never spend any time together.

Josephine:

"... very rarely do we go out together, unless we are going out to supper somewhere. We very rarely go out alone and just spend time together, and I try to leave him alone really, to get on with his work."

Her relationship to his career

Much of the distance that develops in these relationships is affected by the dedication with which men tackle their careers. When he marries there is no question of him losing his right to operate directly in the world and maintain a direct relationship with economic employment. This is not the case for women. Marriage usually involves children, and childcare is understood as women's responsibility. When Josephine decided to return to work it caused tremendous 'soul searching'.

Josephine:

"I don't think he's had to have the soul searching and the thinking and re-assessing that I've had to have."

A woman's relationship with her husband is based on the idea that his paid work will never be threatened by anything she does. The domestic division of labour reflects this. Catherine has explained this:

Carole:

"The assumption is that his job will always have priority."

In traditional families in this community the male career is central to life and women take men's lives very seriously.

When Malcolm changed jobs Anna was very concerned in case Malcolm was unhappy. As it turned out the job was very stressful.

Anna:

"We came here and there was this job which he was trying. It was a stress because he didn't know whether the job would work out. So then we had a year when he was in the job hating it, and looking for another job."

Now Malcolm has another new job working as a solicitor and this is proving more successful than the last.

Anna:

"The first six months were a bit tense but really it is only in the last year that he has relaxed."

Anna is very aware that problems in Malcolm's job reflect throughout the whole family. She describes the long period of job problems as 'a fantastic strain'.

Anna:

"I mean it was a fantastic strain really. You've got to have a job you know. It's got to work out, all the pressure is on him really because I'm not working. But he hasn't actually had time to turn round and look at the family. In the meantime Lucy is growing up."

Barbara's husband is an army training lecturer; he loathes the work, but he has heavy family commitments.

Barbara:

"I know he's not happy. He'd leave like a shot but we've got the mortgage and the children and where else could he earn that kind of money?"

The pressure is on Barbara to keep everything running smoothly at home to compensate for pressures at work.

Barbara:

"I couldn't take a job. I wouldn't. I'm fully committed at home and perhaps it makes up a bit if everything is nice."

Maria supports her husband in his new job. Martin has just started work as a deputy head in a junior school. Maria describes him as 'a workaholic'. He likes to be very well prepared in class.

Maria:

"It is him anyway, he's got to put his absolute best into it - he is a workaholic - he is a perfectionist - he won't settle for second best. So he won't go into his classroom not knowing what he's doing."

The job also involves many other responsibilities which has put Martin under considerable pressure.

Maria:

"He has all the other responsibilities... it's just a strain at first. I don't think his head is expecting him to work quite as hard - that's just the way he is."

Raymond also has a new job which involves an element of risk as it is a business venture. Carole supports him in this move.

Carole:

"He has just started a new business. It's still very exciting for him. The work is coming in - slowly but not more slowly than they anticipated and he enjoys it."

Peggy sees Dennis' career snowball and increase in importance to him.

Peggy:

"His work does get more and more important to him because he gets busier and busier and he gets more and more responsibility. That's the core of it."

But Peggy assumes that the family still comes first.

Peggy:

"Well his work is very important to him but I think the family does come first. I have always thought that it would with him..."

Although Dennis is also another 'workaholic' and Peggy says that he would work 24 hours out of 24 if 'I didn't force him to stop.'

In their studies of French managers Evans and Bartolome (1980) concentrated on similar issues to those raised above. They look at the relationship between home and work in managers' lives and talked to their wives about their experiences. They found that wives of managers put their husbands' lives and work before their own concerns. Most wives seemed to agree that their husbands' work was a priority.

"'As long as he is happy I'm happy.' This was the single most common phrase used by the wives." (Evans and Bartolome in Derr 1980, p.289)

This sense of the male career and happiness as a priority is also part of the marriage relationship on the Denton Estate. Most women were concerned that their husbands should be happy at work and would sacrifice some of their own interests to make sure that this was so - though not quite all. Of the women I talked to Rose is not quite so accommodating. She will not tolerate bad moods from Chris.

LH:

"Does it make a big difference if he's not happy in his job?"

Rose:

"Yes. Yes it does very much so. He gets depressed."

LH:

"Is that tied up with whether you are happy or not?"

Rose:

"If he's really moody, just being bloody-minded, I'm afraid I am too. I pick it up. I'm not very good at being a caring little butterfly."

Kate also begun to feel ignored when Gerald began a new career in teaching.

Kate:

"Having been in research and then teaching he was totally involved in the new job... partly because it was new and very demanding. So he was working very long hours and totally engrossed in it which made me feel as though I didn't exist."

This sense of being ignored also was important in the research work of Evans and Bartolome. They suggest that the wives of French managers experience this as a vacuum in their lives, often understood retrospectively.

"Typically, the reproaches of the wife are not specific and tangible. Her husband is rarely aggressive, deliberately inconsiderate, or abusive of his family. Almost all the French wives used the phrase, 'Il n'est pas disponible' which can best be translated as 'He isn't psychologically available...' The vacuum that is created in private life by work tension is not a glaringly visible phenomenon. It is far more insidious. It is often recognised only in retrospect." (Evans and Bartholome in Derr, p.287).

However if these women are rather more demanding than the wives of the French study, their priorities are effectively the same. Even Josephine, who works full time, struggles to accommodate Barry's work. He runs an antique business from their home.

Josephine:

"We've had to keep reassessing all the time, the way we are sharing out, the way we are looking after the children, and the period of time that is allocated to Barry for working."

It is difficult to imagine how a woman would maintain a job at home in similar circumstances. Josephine and Barry manage by constant negotiation. Also Josephine does all the cooking and childcare when she is at home.

All of the relationships in this study are based on the idea that childcare is the woman's concern and therefore in periods of crisis she must give up work if necessary, to care for the children.

When Kate's son was ill she left her job.

Kate:

"I stopped working, not because I wanted to do mothering full-time, but because my son was ill and there was no alternative at the time."

'No alternative' because her son needed full-time care and inevitably that meant her sacrifice rather than Gerald leaving his job. Most of these women accept the priority given to the male career. Jenny points out that Alex could do less at work.

Jenny:

"He (Alex) could keep his job (doing less work) but it's the trouble with most academics... if you enjoy the job you go on to more and more things so the actual requirements of his job aren't such long hours but if he's going to do it and feel he's done it well then he's got to do research..."

Alex is also committed to climbing the career ladder so he has to take on a number of commitments which will help this project.

Jenny:

"He's got so many strings to his bow - a graduate tutor - he's on this committee and that committee and that's all totally apart from being a lecturer."

Consequently childcare is not one of his priorities. The over-commitment to work means that Alex has very little time to care for his own children. Jenny finds this frustrating.

Jenny:

"My complaint really is that Alex doesn't have enough time off, but he doesn't like me asking him to take time off."

She had asked Alex to take care of the children on one of his free afternoons. She wanted to take her eldest daughter into town to buy books.

Jenny:

"I wanted to take Katy to the bookshop once and I wanted him to have Jack... He was very put out about it. He said about how I expected him to work and do that as well and it was Anna that had him in the end... it was an afternoon and he hadn't got any lectures or anything but he felt that was a time he should be working."

Equality in marriage

Underlying some of these commitments is a clear expectation of the division of labour which allows men to prioritise their job and maintains, by implication, women's place in the home. When Alex was asked to provide extra childcare, 'He was very put out about it'. Despite the vision of the equalising of roles, the division of labour remains rigidly fixed in many homes with men falling back on male prerogative to avoid childcare during 'working hours'. When women take time off from childcare a neighbour usually has the children. 'I'm lucky to live next to Jane', is the kind of comment frequently made because reciprocal childcare arrangements between women friends are the major source of support during the day.

There is very little expectation of equality. The closest approach to equality is a husband who 'helps'. Sue Lees' recent research on teenage girls in London reveals very similar issues despite age and class differences. Neither her girls nor these women have any realistic analysis of marriage. Instead as Sue Lees explains:

"The assumption is that any disadvantages can be avoided by being careful who you marry." (Lees 1986, p.11).

This is very much the case for the women in this community. Women frequently believe their husbands to be better than other husbands, on very flimsy evidence.

Kate:

"My sister-in-law has it worse than me. My brother expects the traditional wife. Just like my dad."

Rose:

"Her husband (referring to a male participant in this study) is never at home. At least Chris is here in the evenings even if he is too tired to help much."

Jenny:

"I think she (another woman in this study) has been very unhappy but then he is such a chauvinist."

Grateful for a husband who is liberal and perhaps relatively helpful, women repress bad feelings about their own missed opportunities and resentment about a life invested in other people; unless the marriage breaks down and then the anger is allowed to surface.

Single parent mothers

When marriages break down on the estate it is often a protracted and traumatic event for everyone. Inevitably women view marriage and fatherhood differently after the break up, and it is often the very things which they had previously claimed to support most wholeheartedly which draw their indignation.

While married to Neil, Tess often seemed depressed but she apparently supported Neil's careerism and ambition. Now she admits that she is angry for all those years when she sacrificed her life for his.

Tess:

"I was depressed, but now I'm angry. I hate him. I know it's difficult to accept that but I hate him. All those years he was away or working and I was just stuck at home bringing up the children. When he was there he could organise some wonderful project. I was exhausted. I couldn't be wonderful. I resent it all now. How he used my life to get on in his career."

Brenda echoes the words about depression. She was married to Max.

Brenda:

"I suffered really badly with post-natal depression after Ellie. I couldn't pull myself together. He just went off to work every day. I actually think he felt better because I was so low."

Both Max and Neil now seem to cope very well with the demands of work and childcare. However Tess comments.

Tess:

"Yes, everyone says how wonderful he is. Running a home and job. He only has the children at the weekend. I know he's a wonderful cook. I resent the whole thing."

She now has a job as a teacher, and her life revolves around intricate childcare arrangements. However the children remain her major solace. She needs them constantly.

Tess:

"I couldn't let them go to Neil even more. They're my children. I don't want them to go away. I don't see why he should have them more. I had them because I want them and I love them."

It was this devotion which made her give up her job initially when they were born, and this devotion makes her life very difficult. If Tess would let Neil take care of the children more often his life would have to change and hers would be easier. Neil says he would be prepared to have the children more often but will not be involved in legal wrangles.

Neil:

"It will take all the pleasure out of seeing them."

As it is, Tess struggles to balance job and childcare, exhausting herself in the process.

Brenda also resents Max's lifestyle, especially his claim to be a childcare expert.

Brenda:

"He worked in the Child Psychology Unit and if anything went wrong he used to say 'Don't look up the experts, I'm the expert.' Can you imagine it? Being married to someone who makes you feel totally inadequate? When Ellie was one year old I left him. I can't stand the sight of him. Now he can be an expert with Ellie once a fortnight and I don't have to watch it."

He is another father who sees his daughter once a fortnight and therefore dovetails his childcare responsibilities into a busy schedule.

When the marriage breaks down, the husband who was seen as friend and support usually becomes the enemy. Often women who were very depressed become very angry. The anger makes them reconsider their lives as married women and mothers and at that point a new interpretation of married life and parenthood emerges. Women who are still married find it difficult to begin this process because their lives have been invested in acting as his support system.

Divorce is liberating and distressing. Another single parent explains.

Sandra:

"Now I'm on my own I just want to be alone. I want to recover. I think there is a person inside me somewhere but I don't know who she is or what she is like."

This sense of having lost herself in marriage was echoed by Tess.

Tess:

"I feel it's a maze and someone is going to come out the other end. Me!"

Ellen is going through a period of re-assessment.

"I like to have time to myself. It wasn't so long ago that if the children weren't at home I felt I didn't exist. Now I am beginning to relax if they are here or not. I do invest in myself. I work hard so why not? Some clothes, piano lessons, theatre visits. I'm worth it!"

This declaration of self worth was echoed by one of the employed married women.

Rose:

"Now I'm working I'm going to have whatever I like, if I can afford it."

It's not simply money that gives most employed women, but especially single parent mothers, their own sense of identity. Sandra says it's having some time and space to herself.

Sandra:

"Nobody tells me what to do. I don't fit in with anybody's life. My life, my priorities, that's what counts."

A single parent mother who had moved out of the Denton Estate when she was divorced also talked about her freedom.

Single parent mothers often resent their husbands' career success and earning potential. They often feel over-stretched and stressed. However there was also a strong feeling among all the single parent mothers of reclaiming some aspects of themselves which they remained unwilling to lose in any future relationship.

Summary

This section has looked at some of the compromises which have to be made for women to be mothers in a cultural setting where this involves a full-time commitment to house, husband and children, at least in the early years. The conflicts and contradictions which arise are resolved in ways which usually reinforce the traditional expectations of our society.

Some of the themes which have emerged from this section are about the commitment women make to motherhood and the accompanying anxieties which this commitment entails. Women said that they had children because they wanted them and that decision usually meant that they spent the early years at home looking after them. These women also maintained that they determined the number and spacing of the children and once they had made a decision to stay at home, having a number of children helped to justify that decision.

In some ways being a mother was seen as the corollary to the male career in that the job was organised to give the children the best possible experiences during their early years. However motherhood was also often accompanied by feelings of low esteem, guilt and inadequacy because the responsibility for the upbringing of children is very great, mothers do not always feel appreciated enough by their husbands and the work often involves long hours in isolation. Many of the women had suffered from depression and continued to do so during the course of this study.

The decision not to go out to a paid job was often taken in the knowledge that it would mean a struggle. The husbands in this area usually have well paid jobs and this means that they can support the family during her time out of paid work. While she is at home full-time, the woman provides a complete resource system for the family. If she returned to

work she would be competing with the husband in the home. He would be forced to take on more childcare and housework or they would have to employ other people to do it. These women believe that their husbands would not greatly increase their domestic commitments if the wife returns to employment. She would therefore be coping with two demanding workloads and many of the women are not prepared to do that.

Once the woman has decided to stay at home full-time motherhood can expand to fill up every moment of the day. Because of a commitment to running a complete resource system most of these women find this period of their lives very tiring. The longer they stay away from paid employment, the more difficult it is to return, and some of these mothers on the Denton Estate never return.

CHAPTER 7

FATHERHOOD ON THE DENTON ESTATE

Introduction

In this section I am going to reconsider some of the areas of enquiry which I raised for women as mothers to show how the same issues are very different for men. I look at reasons why men marry and have children, what is included in fathering and what kind of job it is.

'Men at Home' and 'Men at Work' are the equivalent sections to 'Staying at Home' and 'Women at Work' but issues in men's lives are very different. Expectations and priorities are very different. Explanations and rationalisations for the pattern of their lives vary considerably from those of the women. Finally 'His Relationship with Her' discusses how he values his wife as a mother and a resource.

2) Fatherhood

Just as the research in the last section on motherhood looked at the ways in which motherhood is organised, explained and justified, so this section will apply a similar analysis to fatherhood. As presently organised on the Denton Estate motherhood and fatherhood are not the same kind of role and so it is not possible to slot the material on fathers into the same categories used for mothers. The categories arise from the material itself and the absence, for example, of an equivalent section on 'Guilt and Anxiety' for fathers, is not necessarily because they do not feel these emotions but perhaps because these emotions may not be focused on their children or perhaps more simply because they were not expressed to me.

The basic tools of analysis remain the same however; that is to look at the contradictions and conflicts in men's lives and to understand how these are reconciled. How does the resolution of these conflicts leave women at home while men continue at work? In this situation does equality have any meaning?

The first section looks at the reasons fathers give for having children. The next section looks at the role of fatherhood and what it now includes. I have suggested in the introduction to this study that the relationship between men and their children may be changing. The likelihood of divorce is far greater. The need to establish relationships where the father is indispensable to the child is also greater. The peripheral authoritarian father figure has disappeared, from the Denton Estate at least, so the next sections look at men's emotional ties with their children and how children change their lives.

There is some indication that men who have wives in paid employment do undertake more household tasks, and discussions with male single parents, both those who live full-time with their children and those who have them part-time show how their lives remain very different from their ex-wives.

Many of these men are very involved with their work, which is best expressed by the word 'career'. They seek advancement and financial gain as well as power. The next part looks at men and careers and the importance they assume in men's lives.

The final part concerns the husband's relationship with his wife. Already in the last section there was some indication of how women support men in their careers. What is the reciprocal support which men give to women? Just as men need a wife to support them in their work, how do men support their wives in their work at home or in employment?

Again this is not an exhaustive study, but aims to illustrate some of the issues and concerns of the men who were interviewed with the intention of unravelling some of the ways in which motherhood and fatherhood are tangled together.

2) Why Have Children?

Compared to most of the women I talked to the men were rather reluctant to admit that they wanted to have children. Many more described themselves as having been unwilling to commit themselves to having a child, but having been overtaken by events when their wives became pregnant.

Reluctant fathers

Dennis was by his own account a reluctant father. He says he was terrified at the prospect.

LH:

"Was it your choice to have the children?"

Dennis:

"No, not at all. I mean not initially. I think that I was terrified at the time. I wasn't interested in having kids. I didn't know whether our relationship was strong enough to sustain our having kids. Although that wasn't the sort of thing that I said to Peggy."

However they have three children and Dennis has taken a large part in bringing them up. He says "I think I have taken a very large share". This participation was something which developed as the children grew and he now has no regrets.

Dennis:

"I was not determined to have loads of kids whom I would mould in any particular way. I would be quite happy to sort of avoid the whole

business. But it's just something that has grown through having them, and I don't regret it one little bit."

Malcolm was also uncertain about having children. He had assumed that he might have children at some point in the future endlessly delayed.

Malcolm:

"I hadn't really thought about parenthood before we had kids. I assumed we would have to have them but it certainly wasn't uppermost in my mind."

He says that the first child was 'an accident'.

Malcolm:

"It started like a number of families I suppose, the first one was an accident."

Malcolm maintains that nobody made a decision to have a child. However he knows that Anna wanted children and her inadequate preparation led to pregnancy. He obviously assumes that women must take responsibility for contraception.

LH:

"So it wasn't your decision to have children then?"

Malcolm:

"I don't think it was either of our decisions particularly. I mean I suppose Anna vaguely wanted them and I, left to my own devices I suppose, well I don't think I'd have said, 'No I don't want any children at all'. But one could have put off the moment but because Anna is fairly feckless I suppose there was bound to come a time when she made a mistake. That's how it came about."

Now, however, Malcolm is very committed to his family and like Dennis he says he has no regrets. At the time of this interview however, he had only two children. Now he has four.

Malcolm:

"I wouldn't be without them now and I think it's a crucial part of one's life now."

Harry also maintains that, in earlier years he was not interested in having children and rather like Dennis he was prepared to live without them.

Harry:

"I suppose like a lot of people in my generation when I left university I felt that I didn't want children, because it wasn't a very safe world to bring them up in."

However Harry's circumstances when he married Hazel were rather different from the other men in the study. Hazel already had a small daughter.

Harry:

"But our circumstances are rather strange in that I mean I in a sense married both Ruth and Hazel."

Because he had to cope with one small child having another did not present Harry with great difficulties. It seemed like a natural extension of the family.

Harry:

"She was there already and there was no problem after that. I didn't think 'Perhaps we shouldn't have more children'. Because I had to cope with Ruth I took the whole thing for granted after that."

Barry was another father who maintained that the decision to have children was taken by his wife. He describes himself as "not very interested in the idea" when Josephine had talked to him about having their first baby. At the moment Barry and Josephine are contemplating having a third child. Barry suggests that the pressure comes from her and he can see drawbacks to having another baby.

Barry:

"Josephine feels... this pull that she really does want a third child and she doesn't feel the family is complete until then."

LH:

"Is that a decision that you are part of?"

Barry:

"No I think I'd probably just let it be at two but I quite understand if she wants another and I'll have to go along with that but I know that it will be from a net income to a net outgoing, actually it will be expensive having another because a lot of things are sort of worn out but it's the stopping of the income but I don't want to be sort of nasty about it."

Although Barry has opted out of the decision he says that he will be happy with another child but regrets the loss of freedom that a baby entails especially as the other two children are growing older and need less continuous care and attention.

Barry:

"I don't know, I'll be happy with three I'm sure. It's just that two at the moment are very easy and they're coming up to a point where we'll be able to do more and more things with them and indeed that's another reason why Jo is worried about the gap getting too wide. All the things that we would do with Tom and Sam we won't be able to do if there is a baby 'cos it restricts you or I'll have to go and do it or only she'll be able to do it while the baby sleeps here."

However, Barry believes that if Josephine does not have another baby it will make her bitter when she is older regretting the lost chance to have a child she wanted.

Barry:

"I can see it will be more difficult. I know how it will be when she's past child-bearing age and we've still only got two. It will cast such a shadow over later life that I'm not going to resist it too strongly now."

He sees having a third child as an investment for the future although he is sure that the younger son will feel 'put out'.

Barry:

"Sort of keep the peace and have more around. I know that Tom would very much like having a baby around. He'll appreciate it. But Sam is

still somewhat the baby of the family. I know he'll be very put out and he'll be very grumpy about it."

Barry sees both sides when it comes to a decision about another baby. He does mention a possible loss of Josephine's salary, although she may take maternity leave and return to work after some months. So Barry has opted out of the decision-making about children. He knows that Josephine wants a third child. He does not really have to come to terms with his desire for children although it was Barry who insisted on buying a large house so there would be plenty of space for children.

Positive commitment to fatherhood

Unlike many of the reluctant fathers Gerald was one father who saw children as an essential part of family life and that was the life he wanted for himself. However he describes the process of marriage as 'acquiring a spouse' and having children as 'a kind of package' so in his description of wanting a family he takes the emotion out of the words by relying on abstractions.

LH:

"So is that why you wanted to have children as well, as part of a family?"

Gerald:

"Oh yes. It's a kind of package in a way, or one I didn't analyse in any great depth, something that I wanted and one does the first thing you do about becoming a member of a family, first of all acquire a spouse and then clearly the children follow if you're lucky, and I suppose that's how I've gone into it."

Janet and Jeffrey had tried to start a family. After a lack of success over a couple of years tests revealed that both had problems which would undoubtedly mean infertility. Together they decided to adopt. "It was a

joint decision - we talked about it for a very long time," Jeffrey explained. However the actual decision to contact an adoption agency was taken by Jeffrey.

Jeffrey:

"I was driving down Tottenham Court Road or somewhere and I simply stopped (I think I was in the car, I might have been walking, I can't remember) and I went to a telephone kiosk and I looked up a telephone book, simply took out all the adoption agencies, took their addresses down and then drove off. There was only one really that was any use."

Jeffrey saw children as extending his life which had been very comfortable. Janet was involved in her painting and he already had established his career. Was this going to be enough?

Jeffrey:

"Janet was doing her painting and cycling out to draw and stuff like this, it was a nice life, you know. Are we going to settle for that or are we going to push it a bit further and see what happens...?"

However although having children was a risk, not having them might lead to regrets in later life.

Jeffrey:

"Well we might spend the rest of our lives ticking along quite nicely but wondering what we'd missed - right - so it was a matter really of a sort of leap in the dark. We might adopt children - adopt a child then realise that we'd made a mistake. It was really a matter of saying 'well are we going to settle for what we've got?' which is very comfortable and very nice, or..."

Perhaps because Jeffrey had been told that he could not have children he was able to examine his emotions and decide that he really did want children, and would therefore have to adopt a child. He wanted this even more than Janet did.

Jeffrey:

"Well at one time Janet was not convinced at all."

He says that he realised that having his own children was an essential part of his self image as a benevolent and tolerant man. Confirming this image was important to him.

Jeffrey:

"I think I had a self-image of someone who was totally permissive in terms of a sort of benign tolerance sort of figure, who could basically take anything in life and you know have a couple of kids and take that in his stride, so it wasn't so much a sort of feeling of a tremendous need to fulfil one's self in children but just to feel that one needed to confirm this self image of oneself of basically being sort of all accepting and you know take it in your stride."

This image was rather undermined by the arrival of the children. He sees the nine months pregnancy as a period of adjustment to the idea of having a child. When a child is adopted this cannot apply.

Jeffrey:

"You thought you had done your duty and you'd registered with the adoption agency, but it was never going to happen and being rung up one Thursday saying collect the child the next week and then you realise how tremendously important that nine months' notice is, because you've got to make a whole adjustment to your life in a week. I mean that's basically it."

When their adopted daughter was two, despite having been told that they could not have children, Janet conceived and gave birth to twins. They were unplanned. Jeffrey says, "That was a surprise. We were getting ready to adopt again." So Jeffrey had ample opportunity to test his tolerance and patience as he admits having twins was 'a nightmare'. He looks back on this period as a prolonged crisis, a combination of having twins and trying to keep a grip on an exhausting workload.

Jeffrey:

"You see from my point of view as a father I mean there were two separate crises. One was being rung up by the adoption agency when we were given Denise. The second was when Janet was pregnant with the twins. One kept trying to sort of anticipate the worst and say 'well it's going to be pretty bad, so let's grin and bear it', but what I

round was that I couldn't even predict how bad it was going to be really, I mean I am talking now in terms of sheer physical tiredness."

Those initial unexpectedly traumatic years remain in the forefront of Jeffrey's memories.

Alex and Jenny now have four children and the last of these caused some trauma. Alex said that he had some part in the initial decision to have children.

Alex:

"We both knew what we were doing. She (Jenny) didn't say anything and neither did I but we both wanted children."

Although Alex had been happy to have three children he had not wanted four and had been angry when Jenny was pregnant for the fourth time. Jenny reported that he had even suggested initially that she had an abortion. However the fourth child is now safely part of their family.

Divorced fathers

Some of the divorced fathers maintained that the impetus for having children came from their ex-wives. Neil says that the desire for having children came from Tess.

Neil:

"Tess always wanted children and I went along with that."

Max also says that Brenda wanted a child.

Max:

"She got pregnant and we decided to get married. I don't remember it as being my decision."

Again the idea of pregnancy as 'an accident' was suggested by Max as it was by Malcolm. However this indicates how men are prepared to let women take responsibility for contraception.

Paul is less sure that Sandra forced him into fatherhood. ~~1974~~

Paul:

"When I look at these two now I want them now, I think I must have wanted them then. I know I always wanted children and that was one reason why I split up with my first wife because she would not have a child with me."

Desire for fatherhood re-assessed

In this material there is a divide between those men who said they did want children and those who did not. In some cases the men who wanted children had been forced to consider the issue because of the prospect of not being able to have them. Jeffrey had been told he was unable to have children, Paul's first wife did not want children. These men had therefore recognised their own desire for children through circumstances where children seemed difficult to acquire.

Bertrand Russell's autobiography gives an interesting insight into this issue. He is forced to admit his desire for children because the women with whom he had relationships were either unwilling or unable to be mothers.

"The chief difficulty with Colette had been that she was unwilling to have children and I felt if I was ever to have children I could not put it off any longer." (Russell 1975, p.328).

This was a description of his feelings at the age of 45. Colette's unwillingness to undertake motherhood forced Russell to come to terms with his own desire for children.

"Ever since the day, in the summer of 1894, when I walked with Alys on Richmond Green... I had tried to suppress my desire for children. It had, however, grown continually stronger until it had become almost insupportable." (Russell 1975, p.383).

Fortunately for Russell he met and married Dora Black and she agreed to have some children.

"When my first child was born in November 1921 I felt an immense release of pent-up emotion, and during the next ten years my main purposes were parental." (Russell 1975, p.385).

Although there are exceptions, many men will deny a desire for children. This suggestion also emerged from the research by Charlie Lewis (in Magee and O'Brian 1982). He talked to a number of men who denied any interest in having children until faced with pregnancy. Because the women on the Denton Estate are prepared to say that they want children, this enables men to remain ambivalent or negative. Once a child is born her expressed desire for the child means she takes responsibility for it.

The reason for believing that men do want children despite apparent initial lack of commitment comes from a number of indications. First men benefit from a family life with a wife at home because while she is caring for the children she also takes care of him. Second, on divorce these men struggle very hard to maintain their links with their children. Therefore although it is part of the culture of masculinity that men deny wanting to have children these men benefit from the lifestyle which having children brings.

3) The_Father's_Role

However even fathers who want children rarely take a half share in their maintenance. Alex was one father who admitted he wanted a baby. He

did initially take care of the first child in the afternoons while Jenny worked. After a few months Jenny was doing the childcare full-time as Alex became involved in his work and childcare slipped to a less important place in his life. Childhood lasts a long time and men can rely on women to do it. Bertrand Russell suggests he was a participatory father, but he liked to be able to withdraw. He ran a school with Dora Russell but she explains in her autobiography that he had his private study where he could retire from the chaos.

"The tower room was to be got ready for Bertie's study... here he could be above the battle as and when he chose." (Dora Russell 1981).

This ability to escape when it becomes inconvenient has been commented on by many writers. Ann Oakley did not find much evidence for babycare as a joint project. She found her sample of fathers saw their five-month-old babies for an hour a day or less (Oakley 1972).

Most men say that they have children because their wives wanted them. Whether men express a desire for children or not this does not necessarily affect the amount of childcare they undertake over a long span of time.

Changes in the father's role

Fatherhood is no longer the obviously authoritarian and patriarchal relationship with wives and children. The changing social expectations were discussed in the introduction to this study where I suggested that a conflict exists between the continuing patriarchal organisation of economic life and the expectation of mutuality and some equality at home. Lack of childcare provision and the structure of the working day makes it difficult to combine paid work with parenthood for many people. The career structure assumes that most men will have the wife as a resource at home. For these

reasons during the early years of children's lives it is usually the father who goes out to paid work and the mother who stays at home in the middle class family. Although the expectation remains that fathers will provide for the family there is also an expectation that personal relations within the family will be companionable and supportive.

The job of father has many layers and different aspects. Gerald has still not sorted out exactly what it involves. He points to the changes that have taken place during his lifetime. His own father did not seem to participate in childcare.

Gerald:

"Well I didn't know much about those kinds of things. If I understood anything about being a parent before I got married I suppose I would not have considered childcare to be part of the father's role."

Although as a child his vision of fatherhood from observing his own father did not include childcare, his ideas began to change.

Gerald:

"When I was a teenager and saw people get married and have children I began to see that things weren't quite the same as for my parents."

Although Gerald does now get involved in the day-to-day care of his children he admits that he does try to avoid some of the hard work. This avoidance must have become more difficult since in 1988 he now has four children.

Gerald:

"There are so many layers and levels to the job, aren't there? There's the day-to-day things which I sort of get involved in a bit and to a fair extent enjoy it when I get involved. Not to say I don't try to avoid them."

He admits that he has never been as involved in childcare as Kate and suggests that this pattern of great female involvement establishes itself early on.

Gerald:

"I have never been afraid of doing all the things, that small babies need, although one's got to right from the start say I've never done as much as Kate has looking after the small babies and then you get in a pattern it established itself right from the start. And probably establishes itself even before a child starts to cry actually."

Raymond also says that he likes babies but admits to not enjoying the hard work of taking care of them. He left most of that to Carole.

Raymond:

"I like little babies but I didn't like caring for the babies quite so much. I was quite happy to leave the bulk of that to Carole, I mean she was feeding them and it was all right, I could cop out of that quite easily..."

Amongst these fathers many suggested that they increased their share of childcare once the child was no longer a baby.

Chris feels his relationship with his children has improved as they got older. When they were younger he avoided some of the work.

Chris:

"I haven't done anywhere like as much as I should have done. But I am a lot more interested in the kids now that they are older as well. Rose points out to me. It's not that I dislike young kids, particularly young babies, I don't have a lot of enthusiasm for young babies, because you don't get any response from them. Well you get response but it's not a two-way interchange of conversation or whatever, you know..."

This male lack of involvement with babies is helped by economic structures which operates so as to discourage men from childcare - work patterns and lack of paternity leave and lack of childcare facilities in places where most men work.

The responsibility of fatherhood

Fatherhood has involved more childcare than Gerald first anticipated but not as much as he expects from his wife. He also feels responsible for maintaining a lifestyle to provide his children with a good 'model' of parenthood.

Gerald:

"Then there's the other side, not just the day-to-day things, although you can't sort of separate it out, but wanting to be an individual that your kids can model themselves on. And being quite happy about that responsibility, that's part of being a family, it's hard to know what to do in that case, you just try and be a good parent."

This rather abstract sense of responsibility is also taken up by Martin. Martin considered this point about paternal responsibilities, which are not just on the 'day-to-day' level.

Martin:

"Well I suppose it struck me when I was up Skiddaw and I decided to climb Skiddaw by myself and the clouds were coming down and I had to decide whether to keep going or to turn around and I thought of my family down there you see and I suppose that was the responsibility not weighing heavily upon me but just reminding me they really needed me down there and that they would be stuck if I didn't come back and it would cause quite a lot of chaos and hardship - as it would if I lost Maria, goodness. So, yes, I do feel a tremendous sense of responsibility."

Martin 'opts out' of day-to-day responsibility "because I go to work". (His wife Maria also teaches part-time.)

Martin:

"The day-to-day level, I opt out of the responsibilities for the children because I go to work but overall I suppose that that's necessary because my responsibility is for other children and I am getting paid for that."

The father at home

Of all the men I talked to about fatherhood Barry seems to feel the closest involvement with his children because he is the parent 'at home'.

Barry:

"I noticed at the beginning of this term I was very sorry that Sam wasn't starting school. He's very happy at nursery, it just seemed a shame he couldn't sort of move on. I found myself quite interested in what he was doing and of course I'm interested in what's going on at the school."

Barry is involved with his children on a level which is not apparent with other fathers. He believes that he is doing a good job because he has read some 'psychological studies' and compares his own children to the 'healthy normal' child.

Barry:

"They can play and they do play quite well. And quite constructively. It's quite satisfying to see that they can play together so much and for so long. I've read one or two reports that it is a sign of pretty happy children that they can have constructive and extended play without any supervision or help. I'm glad about that. I feel that is the only healthy normal sign that I can point to directly because it's been done in studies and shown to be a good thing."

Barry does give the children a lot of attention and is very aware of problems and shortcomings.

Barry:

"I realise that Tom doesn't know the order of the days of the week so I'm remembering to go through that now, walking home and things like that although he gets too tired."

Ironically Barry thinks a father who is out 'at work' all day may give his children more attention than he does. He works at home.

Barry:

"Families where the father comes home at the end of a working day and has to play very intensely with the children, has to really work at it, although in some ways they probably got more attention than they

might from me. If I've been to London for a day or something, I come back and actually I do pay more attention I suppose to the children."

This is an interesting idea which is raised by Graeme Russell in his study of 50 Australian families in which the father took a major or equal responsibility for childcare. These fathers played less with their children than his traditional fathers presumably because they spent more time in taking care of the children (Russell 1983).

Giving attention

The kind of attention which fathers gave to their children was dependent upon their situation and their attitudes to childcare. Single parents who did not live with their children were more likely to drop everything and concentrate on the child on those weekends when they had them to stay.

Paul:

"I try to clear that weekend of all other engagements."

Neil:

"I don't try to do anything else."

Max:

"She gets my full attention."

Even so, with all fathers there are differences about what the attention might include. This varies with the age of the child. Paul sits down to play with his son.

Paul:

"Hours on the train set we've had this year."

Neil is more inclined to let the children 'potter around' and occupy themselves while he cooks for them, sews and generally keeps them going in their activities.

Neil:

"I showed Tom how to repair the bike and then helped Ben to saw this wood. Alice was making a collage so I dug out glue, scissors and lots of old magazines. Then we all went swimming after lunch."

Many of the fathers preferred to include their children, where possible, in adult projects rather than joining in their play.

Simon:

"He was handing me the bricks and I made the wall. It worked very well."

This idea about including children in adult projects was defined by Harry in a clear if rhetorical style. This was an example of fathers explaining a philosophy of childcare in a way which had not happened once during interviews with mothers. He begins by admitting that his wife would like him to undertake more childcare.

Harry:

"Well if I'm honest, Hazel would like me to spend more time with the children. But I regard that as quite a large commitment. I'm convinced that if the children see one contributing to their environment by doing things around the place, it isn't necessary to be actually working with them all the time. Usually I'm not just doing artificial things to please them."

Harry goes on to explain that demonstrating his independent existence from his children is important.

Harry:

"It is important to demonstrate in their environment that you actually have a meaningful and independent existence to theirs. I think lots of people perhaps devote an awful lot of time to their children, doing what they think their children want to do. Which I'm not sure is right, actually. They are part of the community, and to a certain extent I think it's very good for children to make their own way in

that community rather than being guided through it very carefully. That you know, you are really there most when you are actually on your own doing something, being exposed to a certain extent. So I think that's good."

This philosophy of childcare has certain benefits in Harry's life. He gets on with what he wants to do most of the time. Harry seems to be saying that he does not want to be a mother. He wants space from his children and an 'independent existence'. Something which is largely denied to his wife, though she wants it too. The difference is he can get it. The work of childcare is not the major preoccupation of life. Fatherhood is experienced far more as a role than motherhood can possibly be. This is because the father has a timetable and a schedule out in the world which must be adhered to.

The father as a provider

This view of fatherhood as continuing to revolve around the idea of providing for the family is reflected in the attitudes of most of the men in this study.

Gerald admits this old-fashioned view of father as provider continues to underlie his lifestyle.

Gerald:

"I try to go back and see what my parents would say, what they expect of a good father, very much the old line was 'a provider', now ironically for the last five years I have been provider in the sense that Kate hasn't worked, not significantly when it comes to it, therefore I've actually gone back to the traditional role as a provider."

This also seems to motivate other fathers.

Alasdair:

"I don't work just to provide money but that cannot be discounted."

George:

"I've got to work. There is no alternative given my commitments."

Alex:

"The job is very important to me but yes, important to the family - it keeps them alive."

Matthew:

"My contribution does involve my work - the income - all that."

This does not necessarily change after divorce. The father has limited legal commitments to maintain his wife but he must maintain his children. Most of the divorced fathers take that aspect of life very seriously, although all have ex-wives who are in paid employment.

Max:

"Maintaining another home for Ellie is a priority and I don't begrudge the maintenance. Of course I want to help to support her."

Paul:

"I am committed to supporting the children."

However, once the ex-wife is in employment, she may consider herself as 'the provider'. Neil knows he shares this role with Tess.

Neil:

"The money is important to Tess so we keep re-assessing what my share should be, but I admit it's a shared job now, supporting the children."

Although continuing to provide for the children may be a major motive for men at work, it is not necessarily the major motive, as the divorced fathers in this study were often even more obsessed by their careers than the father in the family.

Neil:

"I've thrown myself into my work."

Paul:

"Work, work, work, I love it, or hate it."

Identity and fatherhood

But whatever their marital status none of these fathers see fatherhood itself as a major source of their identity as motherhood is for their wives. Jeffrey says that his work is his major source of identity and this offsets the time he spends being a father.

Jeffrey:

"Perhaps one of the problems is that if you have got other props like work where a lot of your self-esteem is invested, you can quite easily, without any sacrifice or personal anguish say, 'I am not a good father'... because you haven't put that amount of emotional investment into it."

Being a father is not a source of Jeffrey's self-esteem because his identity is in the world and involves his career. When describing their lives none of the men described themselves as a father. A typical example is

LH:

"How would you describe yourself?"

Simon:

"I am a lecturer."

On a number of occasions the occupational category sprang to mind first when men were asked to talk about themselves. This interchange with Ralph is one example.

LH:

"How would you describe yourself?"

Ralph:

"A teacher."

LH:

"And a father?"

Ralph:

"That too."

One man amongst these fathers who has had to consider his identity is Barry. Not only does he sense that his identity as a worker might be in jeopardy but also his identity as a man. He is at home in the afternoon with the children.

Barry:

"I still remain very much of a dad."

LH:

"You think of yourself as dad?"

Barry:

"Yes, the male part of me remains predominant."

However he feels that his male qualities are revealed by his inability to cuddle the children.

Barry:

"As Josephine said, 'Do sit down and cuddle them sometimes and sit with them'. Yes, I find I can do that especially with Sam in the afternoons, after he's had his lunch or something, he may go off and play or he may just come and sit on me for a while. I realise that they need some sort of physical attention from me but I'm not terribly good at that - perhaps because I remain dad not mum."

However, now he spends more time with them, the children will go to either parent when they are hurt. "They come to us fairly equally" (Barry).

When he collects Tom from school Barry says he has felt awkward amongst all the mothers and has tried to dispel this feeling.

Barry:

"When I started going to school I felt awkward. I didn't know where everything was. I felt a bit awkward being a dad there amongst all the mums and I think, in a way, it was up to me to show myself willing to talk. I wasn't going to be aloof, I was wanting to concern myself with children as the mothers were and I wasn't going to take a very strict male role."

To ease any difficulties Barry showed himself willing to share in transporting children to and from school. He maintains that the other mothers were quite resistant at first.

Barry:

"I didn't mind helping bring them home from school, taking them up to school, I was there to take a share in things. I don't think I lose my manhood for being helpful. I noticed that the resistance was on the side of the women - the mothers. It was interesting that I actually had to make the first step. Now they probably realise that I'm serious."

Despite this commitment to childcare, Barry's life continues to be organised around work. He works every morning restoring antiques and as soon as Jo comes home at 4 pm he returns to his workshop with a break for supper.

Barry:

"I just wish the work didn't quite occupy so much of the time. I could spend more time perhaps when Jo gets back and when she is quite tired it would be nice if I didn't have to go straight back in and get on with some work."

Barry has a balance of work and childcare which he seems to enjoy.

Barry:

"But I do realise I do take off hours here and there just to talk and be with the children and things and sometimes we just sit in the front room and have a cup of tea and times like that I think 'Gosh I'm very lucky to be able to do this.'"

So Barry 'remains male' and is a father to his children despite spending more time with them than many fathers. He remains a father, according to his own analysis, both in his attitude to his children and in his relationship to his work. He identifies with fathers and men although much of his life is spent in childcare and associating with other mothers.

For most other fathers home and work are kept separate and the father's role is very closely intertwined with the image of himself as a paid worker.

Sons and daughters - equal or different?

Does this maintenance of a male identity affect the ways in which men treat sons and daughters? Is there equality in the home or are children treated differently according to their sex?

Dennis felt his responsibilities were different because he had had sons. He would have been less involved in the upbringing of girls.

Dennis:

"If we had girls, well for a start, my part in their upbringing would have been less, but partly, inevitably because of slightly less identification, partly because I would have been more confused about what they need."

This is conjecture on Dennis' part because he only has sons and therefore he might have found his involvement with a daughter greater than he anticipates. His own experiences as a child have motivated him to make sure his sons can cope in the world. He was teased and tormented by other boys at school.

Dennis:

"I was quite certain that my boys wouldn't get into the dreadful position that I was in in the secondary school."

This has involved a toughening up process revolving around sport.

Dennis:

"By not discouraging them from doing things that are dreadfully sexist, that you have to accept the world as it is, like being able to take part in roughish but nevertheless friendly fights. Being able to participate in games, not desperately keenly, but being able to play."

It has also involved taking a manly attitude to physical pain.

Dennis:

"This is part of the attitude I take to them when they are hurt or others are hurt. You can sympathise with pain but I encourage them to go on to the next thing."

Dennis and Peggy have tacitly agreed that their children should be able to withstand being teased.

Dennis:

"Both Peggy and I unconsciously between us have made quite certain that our boys could put up with things like being teased. Instead of when you are teased you collapse which of course only makes you the object of being teased even more, they are in fact quite able to cope with the situation socially and recover from it and bounce back and go back into the group so they can put up with it quite easily. Which I couldn't at school nor I'm sure could my father."

Dennis is clear that fatherhood involves preparing his sons for a world which is sexist by encouraging them to be tough and manly. The underlying philosophy is that children must be brought up to live out social expectations and then they can criticise social roles at a later stage.

Dennis:

"I mean that you have to take account of what most people expect of a boy or of a girl in the society in which you live. You might encourage a child to criticise that or question it, but the first thing you have to do is to get them to act in the way that is expected and then you question and criticise."

Dennis does maintain that conversations about sexual equality and social roles do have a place in their family life. However he has been committed

to preparing his sons to be men first, and then to think about sexual equality.

Dennis:

"If you can't act in a minimum role, right, you are not a boy, you are not a girl, you are nobody. You just can't function, and then you can't question, you can't criticise, because you haven't got that social base. We don't encourage it in a sense of believing that girls shouldn't be able to do football or are not as able as boys. We question that endlessly with them. There are women who do this, that and the other, who still function as women. At the same time I think that can only take place because they are confident in their ordinary role."

In view of this, it is a little surprising that an interesting contradiction in their life which I observed is that Peggy refused to cut the hair of her youngest son and when he was five years old he had very long hair which hung in ringlets in the middle of his back. He was very pretty and looked like a little girl according to most social expectations. I tried to broach this subject with Peggy but she was very defensive and would not talk about the subject.

Like Dennis, Barry also believes that bringing up boys and girls is a different undertaking. His sons are 'good companions'.

Barry:

"I can do more with them I think than I would do with girls. In some ways I find boys are good companions."

He is quite disparaging about daughters and he assumes that fathers have a lesser role to play in bringing them up.

Barry:

"I notice that dads who talk about their daughters say 'Well I try and do this and I try and do that but they are not interested, they go off. They're off with their girl friends or they're off with mum, do whatever they want to do', so I appreciate the fact that they are good companions but I don't sort of cuddle them as much as I probably would with a girl."

George believes there are differences between boys and girls which his treatment echoes.

George:

"The boys like playing football. Sian is not so keen. I think I do treat them differently... I can't help it."

Alex also believes in inherent differences.

Alex:

"Jack is really interested in cricket and he knows how to hold the bat. Katy can't do that."

However the extent to which girls and boys are treated differently varies considerably from family to family.

Neil sees his children at the weekend.

Neil:

"I let Alice play with Cindy when she comes home, but I try to play football with all of them and take them all out cycling."

Given that our society is built around the idea that there are natural sexual differences between women and men, and they are promoted by almost every social agency and institution, and almost every aspect of the media, it is not surprising that girls and boys have different preferences and live out different expectations.

Summary

The father's role is supposed to have changed and he has become more approachable, more domesticated and more involved with the children. The last suggestion is possibly true. As was discussed in the Introduction, the changes in the premises about divorce have affected all fathers' attitudes to children. They can no longer rely on a continuous

relationship with their children mediated through the wife. Most of these middle class fathers have a directly involved relationship with the children. However they are unavailable for long periods of time and in most families the father does not take an equal share. Things may have changed very little since 1969 when Spock could write:

"Of course I don't mean that the father has to give just as many bottles or change as many nappies as the mother, but it's fine for him to do these things occasionally." (Spock 1969, p.41).

This captures a certain vision of family relationships and summarises the father's role. He can occasionally stand in for the mother but his main concerns lie elsewhere - out in the world.

Winnicott is equally as explicit about the paternal role.

"Fathers come into this, not only by the fact that they can be good mothers for limited periods of time but also because they can help to protect the mother and baby from whatever tends to interfere with the bond between them, which is the essence and very nature of childcare." (Winnicott 1964, p.17).

Many of the fathers on the Denton Estate see fatherhood in the same way as Winnicott - provider, protector and occasionally stand-in mother.

4) Men's Emotional Involvement with Their Children

Having children and bringing them up is not quite such a sacrificial act for men as it is for women. They are not threatened with loss of jobs or their identities during the long period of childbirth and childcare. Yet despite suggestions that many men had not wanted children or had not wanted them at that stage in their lives, most of the fathers spoke of how children had changed their lives making them emotionally richer.

Fathers enjoy their children

Dennis had thought that having children was going to be hard work - an idea he had gathered from other hard-pressed parents.

Dennis:

"But I had the impression, which is put about by all sorts of people, that really having kids is absolutely no fun. You know how people endlessly moan about their kids. I think it put me off the idea, that it was just one long hard grind."

However Dennis has not experienced this as a problem. Apart from initial difficulties with the first baby the children have been 'a joy'.

Dennis:

"Apart from sort of tiny patches and we had rather a lot of difficulty I think, getting used to managing Ben when he was the first one, apart from that they have been a joy."

Max, a divorced father, also mentioned the attitudes of other parents.

Max:

"People moan a lot about kids. I was at a dinner party and two women were just complaining for an hour about how difficult their children are. Nobody mentions the pleasure children give you. Some of the best times of my life have been with the kids. After all, you've got to do the work anyway so why not just enjoy it?"

However Max has never cared for or lived with a small child full-time, so his experience of young children is limited to the contact he had with them when they visited him.

Raymond enjoys his relationship with his children. He says he has anxieties about older children but hopes that these will disappear with time.

Raymond:

"I have enjoyed them very much - am enjoying them very much. I think I do like children, yes, I do like small children quite a lot. I don't think I like older children quite so much, but maybe as ours get older you know I'll understand them better."

He says he enjoys them more than Carole.

Raymond:

"We enjoy it, on the whole we enjoy it but perhaps I enjoy it more than Carole but on the whole we enjoy it."

However Raymond can escape to work whereas Carole has given up her job to care for the children full-time.

Unambivalent affection

Malcolm sees relationships with children as being quite different from relationships with adults because of the unconditional love which the parent gives.

Malcolm:

"Because I think any adult if they have a relationship with another adult really expects a return, you want a return. Love, true love I suppose should be entirely selfless, but in adulthood it's not. At least I can't conceive of it as being, can you?... children don't really love you in the same way."

He illustrates this with a story for the time he was in articles in London. He met an old school friend who was already married with children although they were both very young men. His friend tried to explain his feelings for his children.

Malcolm:

"And I remember him saying, I can remember the phrase, you know, yes, 'there is my wife whom I get on with and my kids who I love'. But I was surprised, I felt well, that's pretty awful but now I can understand."

Max also points to the unconditional nature of parental affection.

Max:

"Unconditional, unambivalent love - that's what I give the children and that's what I get back."

Children extend your life

Many of the fathers suggested that having children had changed their lives for the better making life more fulfilling.

Dennis:

"In some ways you are so cut off from emotionally growing experiences when you don't have children."

Harry:

"I think that one of the most alarming things that was good was feeling very vulnerable again - a positive feeling."

Simon:

"They've broadened my experience of life."

Alex says that children have changed his life although he does not say that this is a change for the better.

Alex:

"It isn't possible to consider how life might be without them - unimaginable."

These changes and enforced differences in lifestyle may mean deep personal changes for the father. Julian feels that he is a different person because he has children.

Julian:

"I think I would have become reactionary, probably and intolerant, if we hadn't had kids. It's made me much more tolerant, in good and bad ways. And really I suppose just generally more easy-going now than I was before having kids. You get so set when you don't have kids."

Not all changes feel easy to accept however. The reality of life with children has punctured Jeffrey's image of himself as tolerant and long-suffering. He found the emotional changes brought about by having children to be very traumatic.

Jeffrey:

"Before we had kids I thought I was the perfect 'daddy' figure who would enjoy, love being a father... (but) I've found it an extremely frustrating and harassing experience. I mean I don't feel I'm a bloody awful father but I don't actually think I am a very good one. You know I don't feel that I am a successful dad, whatever that might be. The other thing of course is I did find the baby period just bloody awful. I much more enjoyed it once they hit two and a half or something like that."

Jeffrey is able to stand back from his role as a father.

Jeffrey:

"I don't think that I would want to boast that I was a good father, but on the other hand, I think I would like to say that I actually like the kids."

Harry found his daughter's birth and baby years moved him deeply because it made him consider issues about life and death.

Harry:

"With Jane it was horrifying, how vulnerable I felt. Because from when they are very, very tiny you are not quite sure if they are going to survive. And that's something that has stayed with me for a long time... That was really shocking to me actually, it made me take stock of all sorts of things... that experience."

He believes that women do not experience the emotional shock that men feel when confronted with birth perhaps because women are closer to the whole process.

Harry:

"It's probably an experience that women don't feel as much as men, I think. I think that men are perhaps more aware of that, because of a distance."

Children cure the 'workaholic'

Martin says his involvement with his children stops him from becoming a 'workaholic'.

Martin:

"And when I get home I believe that it's important for me to spend time with my children and my work - however important it is - doesn't prevent me from spending time with them. You know you can become a workaholic and I could probably become that if I wasn't careful. I think conscience would tell me, and I would know that I was. There are times when the children cry out 'Dad do this' or I can see things needing doing and then I realise 'right I should have really done that.'"

This suggestion that children stop men from becoming 'workaholics' was expressed by a number of fathers. Apparently often all that stand in the way of men's being consumed by their work are the demands made by children.

Single parent fathers often gave up working time to be with their children.

Neil:

"I don't try to do anything else when they are here. I'll give up a day's work if necessary."

Paul:

"The children stop me from working in the evening. And that's good. I need that."

Fathers who live with their children also recognise that they need attention.

Jeffrey:

"As soon as I walk in the door they are all over me. I find it very difficult, given the fact that I'm an obsessional worker but everything must find its place."

Harry knows that he has been forced to consider the family and its needs before his own.

Harry:

"I can scarcely think of myself as an individual now. I mean that's a terrible thing to say, but it's true. There are so many factors that have to be taken into consideration, in every situation. My main theme in thinking of the family is that there are four people involved, for equal people involved now."

Having children has forced him to settle down and stop his rather bohemian lifestyle.

Harry:

"I would never have quite developed the kind of sedentary habit in the way that one has had to. I was certainly moving around a hell of a lot more before I was married."

Harry is also a step-father and he found the process of committing himself to his own child an easy experience compared to working at his relationship with his step-daughter.

In his relationship with his step-daughter, Ruth, Harry experienced a long period of adjustment. He contrasts this with his relationship with Jane, his own daughter, explaining that their relationship was more instinctual.

Harry:

"The interesting thing for me is the contrast between Ruth who I felt that I had to work at, I couldn't take anything for granted with Ruth. And I had to work quite hard to get the relationship that I wanted. There were actually an awful lot of things that you couldn't assume and you had to work towards and actually make, whereas with Jane I simply didn't feel that at all. I felt that I was absolutely responsible and you know that there was, it was just one simply played the thing completely from a different place. It was a completely different experience, really and there were all sorts of things that seemed to work straight away from the beginning like chemistry."

Male philosophy of childcare

Many of the fathers also seemed to have some philosophy of childcare worked out in ways that mothers never volunteered. Perhaps the mothers are too close to the task. However if men have greater distance they also speak more fluently about the underlying precepts which influence their role as a father. One of the issues concerning some fathers was problems about encouraging children to be independent.

Harry regrets the dangers of our society which inhibit children's independence.

Harry:

"Children are now less independent because they don't have the same sort of mobility. I regret this very much that even when I lived in the town, there was no fear of letting one out and roaming around... from quite an early age. Whereas here we tend to be rather more protective. And now I think everybody is more protective, in that sense."

Barry is not so sure about this pressure towards independence. He believes that some parents expect too much too soon.

Barry:

"Yes, well I think you've got to balance it very carefully that you don't put too much pressure on them for independence. I've seen some parents, usually mothers, who push their children out almost onto the street and say, 'Go away and play' rather than 'Come here and play', always out. They let them go round to friends and they are almost glad if they are out of the house."

Max, who is a single parent, has lived with his eldest daughter since she was nine and she came to live with him when her mother died. The hardest and most restrictive period of childrearing was already over but Max took his duties seriously.

Max:

"I met her from school every day until she was eleven. I produced her life for her - very much so until recently but I felt she needed the security of me being absolutely dependable."

He felt that the issue of independence was outweighed by his daughter's need for security.

Max:

"Every child is an individual. You can't generalise and in my situation security was a priority for her."

Allan agreed that every child is an individual.

Allan:

"I think the duty of the parent is to remain as flexible as possible to adjust to the individual children."

Like many of the other fathers Dennis had a very well worked out philosophy of childcare which he expounded unsolicited. I shall quote this at some length to show its coherence and rhetorical style.

Dennis:

"I think I'm quite conservative in my view in relation to individual children and I certainly think that children should be happy and should live much more for the present than we were encouraged to do. Everything was for the future, for when 'I grew up, this is good for you' and so on. And I think children should be enabled to experience things that give them confidence in all things, confidence physically, confidence socially, confidence intellectually, confidence technically to be able to handle tools, gadgetry and all those sorts of things. Exactly how you engineer all that I think varies from child to child. And some children will get more at school than others, at home is where, one of the places where you adjust... sort of things some kids don't really manage very well at school... some at home. So in that sense I don't somehow have a fixed view at all, it's a sort of let's look at the individual and see how they are developing. I don't see the role of the parent as in any way fixed. I think the duty of parents is to remain as flexible as possible, to adjust to the individual children."

It does not seem likely that Dennis would have prepared this speech especially for this interview. Perhaps as part of his lecturing work he is used to speaking at length although most of his students work on computers.

It is interesting that no one mother volunteered this kind of philosophy of childcare but confined their conversation to a more mundane unrhetorical style of discussion, and I shall discuss this in greater depth in the conclusion to this work.

Another topic which was raised by fathers which could later be understood as part of their philosophy of childcare were a number of issues about equality.

Harry suggests that, unlike his own father his children are treated equally, by which he seems to mean equal to himself and Hazel, in that they are given explanations and emotions are more open.

Harry:

"I think that is the main difference between me and my father. The way that we try to treat our children as equally as possible. And we don't try to pretend that we don't have feelings or that we don't react, in any given situation. Rather than sort of keeping them closeted and not telling them things and why things are happening and all the rest of it. So which is a bit agonising at the time, and sometimes they get very excited or very depressed. But I think that's better than you know just bringing the event when it actually happens."

Martin also mentioned the issue of equality. He suggests that differences in the age of the child must affect how the child is treated but within that they are treated in a similar way.

Martin:

"I mean their age difference means that we talk about things differently with Katy, although we don't treat them differently from one another. One is not more privileged than the other. Not consciously. We try and be openly as fair as possible... I would say that I love them both equally... you love them for what they are. You love different things about them because they are different children from each other."

Jeffrey on the other hand positively discriminates towards his eldest daughter because she is adopted.

Jeffrey:

"I think I do feel quite a special relationship with Denise really, perhaps because she was the first, and adopted and all sorts of things there and I feel if there is going to be a loser in this family, the chances are it will be Denise and therefore one has got to exercise some kind of positive discrimination."

Anxieties about children

During conversations with women, issues about guilt, anxiety and inadequacy frequently surfaced. This was not really the case with men. Either men are not racked by self-doubt and anxiety when it comes to bringing up children, or they could not admit these anxieties to me. However a number of men expressed anxieties about how their children might turn out.

Barry has reservations about Josephine going back to teaching.

Barry:

"What will happen in the long run I don't know. They might turn round and say 'Why did you leave me Mum?' Things can go wrong with children at any stage."

Here a father expresses anxiety but it is about the mother's role. Some concern about the future was also mentioned by other fathers. None of the mothers suggested that their children might become delinquents but for some fathers it is a real anxiety.

Allan:

"... and the children seem alright at the moment, but if they turn out to be horrible delinquents then... we'll have to cope."

Raymond cannot work out what happens to some children who go off the rails despite a 'good' family background. Supposing this happens to his children?

Raymond:

"It seems pretty hit-and-miss doesn't it. You look around and you see families who seem good, but suppose they turned out to go off the rails in some way or turned out to be not the sort of people that we like very much?"

Gerald also feels anxious and thinks he might have to take some responsibility if his children become 'torn up teenagers'.

Gerald:

"We know plenty of adults who have had terribly tough adolescences for whatever reason... from nice families... and you look at your own child and you think 'Is that how it starts off? Oh God'. Then you start worrying."

However he does not believe that anxiety should stop you from getting on with the job.

Gerald:

"But if that's as far as it goes then that's fine. You are involved in doing things with the child but your actions might make you responsible for a torn up teenager. Still you've got to get on with it."

Although these fathers do have feelings of anxiety they do not surface in the intense form expressed by mothers. This may be very different for fathers from different occupational background. In her study of male doctors in Edinburgh, Faith Elliott (Robertson 1979) did find considerable anxiety and guilt.

"In fact the only workload problem that hospital doctors spoke of with any frequency was the limitation of the father-child relationship. This was reported as problematic by 45% of hospital doctors. These men seemed to feel that they were missing out on the pleasures of seeing their children grow up and becoming 'shadowy' figures in the backgrounds of their lives." (Elliott 1979, p.61).

These (male) doctors worried about their children because their absences were so frequent that they hardly fulfilled any paternal role. The fathers on the Denton Estate saw their children at regular periods every day, and this reflects 'normal' fatherhood so they had fewer anxieties.

The fathers from the Denton Estate all expressed commitment and involvement with their children. Generally these men admitted to benefitting from emotional relations with children which extended into

their lives in many ways and all the fathers, married or divorced, had close loving relations with their children when they saw them.

5) Men at Home

In this community men staying at home means something very different from women staying at home. Some of these men may retreat from work to home in order to write at home undisturbed by meetings or the distractions of university life. This is quite different from being at home and taking responsibility for running the house and maintaining the family.

Providing emergency cover

There have been periods in the life-cycle of some of these families when some men have taken a considerable share of the burden of childcare responsibility. This has usually coincided with children being very young and some domestic emergency arising when the mother could not cope alone. During periods of difficulty or emergency, home commitments may over-ride the career. This happened to Gerald. Kate and Gerald had a child who had croup and was taken into hospital. A series of mistakes led to him having a tracheotomy. The recovery period lasted for months. Initially Gerald and Kate worked together to get their son back to health. Kate left her job. At that time Gerald was not very interested in his job so he took time off from work.

Gerald:

"He got his tube out, but things weren't miraculous at home; there was a lot of worry. A fantastic amount of work suddenly ceased, but it wasn't all the hard work. It was still hard work getting up at night and doing things, nursing, working with his behaviour and that didn't change because he'd had his tube out. That went on. It took Kate and I completely by surprise for six months after he'd had his tube out."

After six months Gerald found a new job and withdrew his attention from home to concentrate on work.

Gerald:

"It was still quite a battle and I wasn't helping much then. When I had my previous job and he still had a tube in, I mean, it was simple. I wasn't that interested in the job and his needs were obvious. When I had a new, very demanding job and apparently his needs were over... I started concentrating on this job and I think it was pretty disastrous for Kate."

There followed an acrimonious period of argument and disagreement. Kate felt overburdened."

Gerald:

"It wasn't so disastrous for me because I was actually coping with a difficult job and we ended up always arguing. I got something out of that period of time; she didn't at all, which, of course, made life very difficult."

Kate suddenly found herself on her own once Gerald found an interesting job; almost solely responsible for a child who still needed constant care.

Dennis and Peggy also went through a difficult time when their eldest son was born. Peggy was ill and depressed and Dennis took over when he was at home - before work, after work and at the weekends.

Dennis:

"When Peggy had Dan, who was the first, she was physically not very well as soon as he was born but also slightly suffered from depression. And she really couldn't cope, so, as a result, I had to actually help to do simple things, like giving the early feed. She couldn't feed Dan and I had to feed him during the first few weeks which, in a sense, sort of pushed me in at the deep end."

This meant that their eldest child identified strongly with Dennis from an early age and Dennis got into a routine of undertaking quite a bit of childcare.

Dennis:

"Certainly it wasn't a conscious decision to do that, it was just the way it happened. And then Dan identified very, very strongly with me when he was young, so that, for a long time, he was always asking me to do things. I tended to do a lot of feeding, a lot of nappy changing, always pretty well bathed all of them since they were babies, when I have been home on those nights... and I have always made breakfast."

Life at this period was non-stop work for Dennis. He took some time off work but usually raced home to take over from Peggy. She recovered and had two other children. Dennis' work has extended and his time available for childcare has now shrunk. A different pattern is now established. Peggy accustomed herself to being the wife and mother. This freed Dennis to devote himself to paid work.

Dennis:

"Quite often, at the end of the day, I am absolutely clapped out. So I don't feel like doing some of the things the kids want me to do, which I don't like feeling, but at the moment I don't have the choice because if I didn't work, we would have no income."

Having twins also catapulted Jeffrey into a participatory pattern of childcare which he had not anticipated nor desired. A major problem was that none of the children slept through the night.

Jeffrey:

"All the kids didn't really sleep until they were three years old. Denise didn't sleep at night, all through until she was three. So we had about three months of Denise sleeping all night and it was absolute bliss and then the twins came along and they not only woke up at different times at night but that lasted for three years."

Jeffrey was forced temporarily to relinquish some of his obsessional work patterns. The burden for Janet was too great. This changed his life as he could no longer go to conferences and give papers.

Jeffrey:

"So what happened was that I really couldn't go away overnight, well certainly not over two nights and about only twice a year for one night would be possible, because it was such an exhausting business at night. So I suppose one thing I had to cut out was a lot of conference-going and things - and I was making mad dashes to Manchester and back in a day, things like that. But I don't necessarily think that was a bad thing because it was the beginning of me learning to say no."

Demands of children make inroads on the established work pattern but the women are still the responsible partner. Jeffrey did not give up work or take a year's sabbatical. He just cut down his massive workload. Chris and Rose also experienced a long emergency period when Rose was pregnant for the third time, having miscarried once and threatening to miscarry again. She went into hospital to rest and Chris was left to take care of Tom who was then nearly three. Chris had been made redundant when the business which employed him moved to London. He therefore went on the dole and took care of Tom, searching for jobs at the same time.

LH:

"Did you do all the cooking at that time?"

Chris:

"Yes, all the can-opening, all the fish-and-chip-getting. Yes. I used to cook a lot more before we had kids, or before we got married, come to think of it. That's a bit of a condemnation, isn't it?"

Fortunately women friends organised a rota for Tom every morning.

Chris:

"I don't know, people said I did really well. I didn't do that much, really. Tom used to go out every morning anyway, all morning, so I got a break which a lot of women don't get."

Chris was already unemployed; the other men maintained their jobs by cutting down at work and increasing time and commitment at home.

This was also Paul's experience. His youngest son was born with severe respiratory problems. For three months he was unable to breathe unaided. How did Paul and Sandra (now his ex-wife) cope?

Paul:

"Sandra wasn't working so she did most of it. I just took time off work whenever I could - day here or there. My mother and my mother-in-law looked after the other children, although I also did some of that too."

These men were in a position to take responsibility for some of the childcare in an emergency. There is an interesting class dimension in this. In 'Fathers, Childbirth and Work', Bell et al (1983) discuss the different effects of the birth of their children on fathers from different social classes. A semi-skilled welder who took three weeks off work when his wife suffered post-natal complications, to take care of the baby, received no pay and no support for this. In comparison, a middle class architect could organise his time around his need to spend time with his wife and baby. The working class man suffers penalties for his positive commitment to fatherhood whereas the middle class man in this case has greater flexibility and support. This is also true for the middle class men in this community. The potential for greater flexibility is there.

On the Denton Estate as in the case of Paul and Sandra, in a crisis other women are often co-opted into the household for support, mainly mothers or friends. Similarly with Chris and Rose, now that Chris is established in his career, his mother-in-law comes to stay when Rose or the children are ill. His job is reasonably flexible but he is more committed to it than to any other job in the past, so he can no longer take long periods off work.

Rose:

"If one of the children is ill and I'm working, my mum comes. I ring her and she can be here in two hours. Chris can take off the odd day but not more."

When her daughter Sadie was ill Fiona relied on her mother.

Fiona:

"She (Sadie) was in hospital for three months. Mum came and took over. Allan worked right through it all. Lucky for him."

When Diane had glandular fever for six months her husband, Ian, took his holiday leave.

Diane:

"He had no choice really. I couldn't get up off the bed. My mum came for a month. His mum came for a month. I thought I'd never get better."

Negotiating domestic responsibilities

During these periods of crisis fathers did reorganise their priorities so that they were available to maintain family life in the absence of their wives or when she could not cope. Apart from periods of crisis, fatherhood can encompass as much or as little work as the father is prepared to expend at home, although this has to be negotiated with the wife.

Raymond and Harry are two extremes. Raymond has always taken care of the children. When their eldest child was nine months old, Carole went to Florence for a week and Raymond took over. They both agree that Raymond certainly does his share of housework and childcare when he is at home. But still, the impression lingers that overall responsibility rests with her.

Raymond:

"As far as organising where the children are going and things - I probably take responsibility for that. To a certain extent, it's because I can drive and she can't, so if we need to go somewhere which involves driving, it's natural for me to take them."

It appears however that Carole makes the decisions and works out the overall plans and Raymond carries out her suggestions.

Raymond:

"The food - Carole would usually have something in mind for the meals, and will have bought food accordingly, and then I will do something with it, maybe what she says, or I may think of something else to do... so, broadly, she decides and I work within her outline plan. When we go shopping, I tend to leave it to her, the buying of food."

Raymond has now taken over all the shopping since Carole is in paid work and he is always seen in Sainsbury's on a Saturday according to Max and other Saturday Sainsbury's shoppers. Shopping does not present a problem for Harry. He has never taken responsibility for that or for housework or childcare since he married.

Harry:

"That's the way it works. Well, I don't wonder why because that is the way it works. Equally when I was on my own, I used to do a lot of cooking, and quite liked cooking. I don't actually dislike doing housework. I quite like tidying. I don't feel that it's a second-rate sort of occupation at all, but it just worked out in that way."

Fathers as cooks

There are times in every home when the husband is alone with the children. Hazel, Rose and Jenny have all taken short-term work contracts. Rose began supply teaching. She was exhausted by the weekend. It was therefore a memorable occasion when Chris cooked a meal.

Rose:

"At the weekend, he suddenly took it into his mind that he was going to cook Sunday lunch. That was great actually. It was a really nice change to have somebody else doing it all."

Even Hazel had a similar experience with Harry:

Hazel:

"I actually worked Saturday morning the other day and I came home and they had got the lunch and it was all ready and prepared and waiting for me to come home and eat it, and that was terrific. It was really a big moment for me, that."

Hazel was so grateful for what is, of course, taken for granted every day by most employed fathers.

If Gerald has to cook he finds the whole process traumatic, especially the shopping. He does not mind shopping if Kate will give him a list of requirements but if he has to work it all out himself he becomes very anxious.

Gerald:

"Planning things. I really don't know why it's so difficult - it's an effort and a responsibility... I must say going out buying food is alright, but figuring out what to buy is something that is terribly difficult."

This problem often presents itself if Kate takes the children to her parents' house for the weekend.

Gerald:

"Going out to buy something... as long as you can find the money and the bag, the shops are very close, aren't they? So that's no problem. It's the bit beforehand because the kids and Kate aren't actually here and they are coming back and I happen to be here, then I've got to sit down and figure out what to buy for the next day when they are coming home. I find it desperate."

Gerald acknowledges that Kate must also find planning menus 'a chore' but assumes that she has got used to it.

Gerald:

"It's something Kate complains about. I know she does it all the time and what a chore it is. I suppose it's something if you're into doing it, it gets done."

He does not mind the work as long as somebody has organised it in advance.

Gerald:

"Mind, if someone says, 'It's bacon tonight', or whatever, I don't mind turning to helping in the kitchen, or anything like that - no particular problem. As much as one doesn't want to do anything at the end of the day."

So Gerald largely avoids the decision-making about food. He will 'help' once the decision has been made.

Barry - the father at home

Barry is also a very reluctant cook. He lives in a role-swap situation, more apparent than real because Josephine is still responsible for cooking, cleaning and running the home. But Barry takes Sam to nursery and looks after him all afternoon while Josephine is at work.

Barry:

"As soon as she comes back, I switch off from the family. She's back at four; I usually get straight back to work and don't really give them much of a thought except at supper time; then she deals with the rest of the day. She still does all the cooking."

Josephine does have two jobs - or even three. She has to support Barry to go on with his work, work herself, and run the house and organise the children. Barry's contribution is to childcare in the afternoon. He does not contribute to housework. He explains that if he had to take care of children full-time he'd feel 'pressurised'. He feels ambivalent about work but if it wasn't there he'd be left with childcare, cooking and housework.

Barry:

"I just wish there wasn't always the work there. Sort of interfering with the pleasure of looking after the children. But if work completely dropped away tomorrow, there was nothing for me to do, then I could just work on the house and just be a dad - truly role-swap - then I'd end up doing the cooking and I probably would feel pressurised. I think that is when the pressure would start."

When he really begins to consider a life without paid employment Barry realises that he would have no reason to refuse all those aspects of childcare and housework which he is able to avoid at the present time.

Barry:

"I'm doing what I want to do, doing work and doing a bit of fathering but if the work dropped away completely I'd still quite enjoy it - it certainly wouldn't be so nice because then I'd have to do things I don't like doing like cooking and I don't think I'd ever enjoy cooking."

Barry maintains that he will undertake chores which other fathers avoid. He does not mind hanging out the washing.

Barry:

"I don't mind things like filling the washing machine and hanging out the clothes. I'm not embarrassed by things like that and I notice that fathers can be. They deliberately won't do it because they are so worried that somebody might see them doing it. So there is virtually nothing that I avoid for the sake of appearances."

However he maintains that he is unable to cook and he has little confidence in his abilities.

Barry:

"I think the cooking is the main thing that would get me down - I just don't find much interest. I'm always amazed that I can produce anything that is remotely edible. It isn't very exciting but then maybe it never is when you cook it. Jo says it's very nice to have a meal presented. She says 'Oh it's very nice', try to eat half-cooked beans or something. And she is so careful not to criticise anything I do cook because she doesn't want to put me off."

In fact life is organised for Barry in just the way that he wants it.

Barry:

"I'm doing what I want to do, doing work and doing a bit of the childcare."

Dennis - the father at home

Dennis suggests that he and Peggy could also undertake a role-swap. He could stay at home and she could go out to work. However he continues to envisage a life organised around his career. It was not something he could undertake while the children were very young. Peggy has stayed at home during the most difficult period when the children were at their most demanding. However he could now stay at home if he could continue to work full-time.

Dennis:

"After making the initial struggle to break, I could easily leave my job and work as compulsively at home... The thing about being flexible within an organisation, it's made it impossible to be in a job where I'm not the boss... I wouldn't be the least unhappy about giving up work to work at home. I am now quite convinced that I could earn my living doing that. So there isn't any reason why we shouldn't, in that sense, swap economic roles, going in and out of the house."

If Dennis was at home he would still be 'at work'.

Dennis:

"I'm sure I could work just as well at home - once I left the security of the job. I can write books at home, just as well as at work. I can never just work for two hours. I have to work for 15."

But while Dennis is working for 15 hours at home somebody still has to cook the supper. Marian Glastonbury's work 'Who Holds the Pens?' seems very relevant at this point. She discusses how male writers rely on a female resource system while rarely acknowledging women's contribution to their work.

"Did you do it all by yourself? How many hot dinners? How many changes of shirt? How many delegated chores make a book?" (Glastonbury 1978, p.29).

Fatherhood and the career

Making fatherhood compatible with careerism may not be a difficult task if there is a wife at home. Julian finds parenthood and work complementary.

Julian:

"I don't know, I certainly don't think of myself as just a parent. I think they (work and parenthood) are just complementary actually, it's just very fortunate that they are complementary, they manage to fit together quite well. I don't feel that I have to sacrifice one for the other."

But usually making parenthood complementary with paid work may mean that fathers opt out of the emotional wear and tear of childcare. With deadlines to meet, childcare does not have priority for the father trying to get to work like Gerald. He prefers to undertake jobs that have a time limit like making the porridge.

Gerald:

"I'm the first up, so I lay the table for breakfast and make the porridge. I confine myself to jobs that have got an end to them, that's why I do those. Having done them, I can say, 'right, that's it.'"

Jobs concerning children always have the potential to expand.

Gerald:

"But jobs with kids aren't so easy, of course. It's like saying to the kids, 'You get yourself dressed now' but you don't actually know when it's going to end. It's really quite difficult when you have the rigid deadline to be in school before the kids get in at ten to nine."

That 9 am deadline makes Jeffrey admit he's a different kind of parent from Janet. He finds it difficult to concentrate on the present situation.

Jeffrey:

"A good example would be breakfast time. I am thinking about getting things done in order to get off to work and there are all sorts of things going on so I'll shout and scream and tell them to shut up or something like that."

This approach often results in chaos. Jeffrey is aware that if he gave them his full attention the situation might not degenerate.

Jeffrey:

"But the way Janet handles them makes me aware that if I paid sufficient attention to what they are saying, and what problem it is that they are trying to sort out amongst themselves, I could probably help them sort the problem out without creating the chaos that I normally do, so I mean, it does keep me having to face the problem of actually relating to people as persons, put it that way."

Jeffrey is going away all day so the chaos will not be his responsibility. He is concerned with getting to work himself and admits to considerable attempts at self-indulgence. Unfortunately this is not understood by the children.

Jeffrey:

"In the mornings they've got to go to school and playgroup and I've got to go to work. If there are problems, it's usually because of my own self-indulgence, I'm trying to get myself a bit of toast, or have a quick quiet fag, or something like that, it's about indulging me because I'm wanting to be indulged and they are wanting to be indulged and they are all screaming at one another."

Jeffrey maintains that he has a slow metabolism this creates problems for the breakfast routine.

Jeffrey:

"I am very slow - sort of my metabolism is a very slow one - and Janet is very quick, so I take 20 minutes longer than she would to do anything, whether it's getting breakfast, washing up..."

Janet, he says, is just the opposite.

Jeffrey:

"Whereas Janet will just get out of bed and she has sort of clocked in and started whereas with me it takes an hour to start functioning."

It is not that care and concern are absent from middle class fathering.

But the work of childcare is not the major preoccupation of life.

Jeffrey:

"I don't pretend it's divided up equally (careers and family) - I am an obsessional worker; really I find it very difficult to hit equilibriums."

Fatherhood still involves distance. Not the distance of the old-style patriarch, but a dialogue with the 'practicalities' of life. Fatherhood is a role which is intended by all these men to be compatible with their careers and when conflicts arise family commitments may be allowed to slide. This is usually at periods of time when the job is very demanding. Anna explains that Malcolm rarely saw his youngest daughter when he was working very hard.

Anna:

"Not that he never saw her (Lois)... although she was in bed by the time he came in and at the weekend he hadn't got enough energy. All his energy was going into trying to work out his job."

The family may pull in one direction, career in another. A real involvement with children may mean changing priorities and time commitments. Dennis experiences himself in conflict over balancing family and career. "I am totally schizophrenic about it." This 'schizophrenia' which Dennis discussed is, in fact, more easily reconciled in men's lives than in women's. Paid work and fatherhood are seen as complementary. The 'schizophrenia' is overcome in these men's lives by understanding fatherhood as a role rather than a total commitment. Total commitment involves caring about what goes into the lunch-box, worrying if children

don't wear a vest, making sure they go to the dentist. Total commitment is time consuming.

For the divorced father, once the emotional trauma has subsided they may prefer their post-divorce arrangements.

Paul:

"The truth is that I like it like this. I can get on with my work and I can periodically saturate myself in the children."

Neil is relieved not to be involved in domestic clutter. He seems to prefer the present post-divorce arrangement. When he lived with Tess toys and children's paraphernalia were always evident.

Neil:

"The amazing thing is, things stay where you put them. I clean up once a week after the children have gone back and that's it really."

All fathers on the Denton Estate give their work and career a high priority. In times of crisis when the family is threatened the father may find the time for substituting for the mother. At other periods childcare and housework may have a lower priority as demands of the job take over.

6) His_Relationship_with_Her

It proved quite difficult to discuss with the men in this study why they had got married. Once the question was asked it somehow brought sexuality onto the agenda, and as a female interviewer this was not always easy for me to deal with successfully. I was conscious that the discussion could get out of hand and influence the rest of the interview. I therefore began to ask this question at the end of the interview but failed to get many detailed replies. Therefore these men's replies cannot necessarily be taken at face value and the possibility of affection, fulfilling

relationships, etc. cannot be ruled out simply because the men did not talk about them. I give some examples below of how conversations took place.

Matthew said he married mainly for reasons 'to do with sex'.

LH:

"Why did you decide to get married?"

Matthew:

"Lots of reasons really, most of them to do with sex."

Chris also maintained that the initial decision was influenced by sexual motives.

Chris:

"We were both very naive. There was an incident on a train as I remember. Then I began to think that sex in comfort was a good idea. How that led me to marriage I'm not quite sure."

Max says it was not sex but pregnancy which encouraged him to marry.

Max:

"She got pregnant and we got married. In a nutshell."

Allan maintained his motives for marriage were purely sexual.

Allan:

"Lust".

Undoubtedly marriage had more to do with affection for the women they married than these descriptions of sexual motives would imply. In the section 'Why Have Children', many fathers maintained that although they had got married they had wanted to postpone having children. It might be reasonable to assume that they were involved in a relationship which they found fulfilling and that is why they got married.

Where the response was not in terms of sex, some men did suggest that

they got married as part of a social process rather than an individual decision.

Peter:

"Nearly everybody gets married."

Michael:

"I did not really consider not getting married."

Simon:

"I was at that stage of my life."

These comments indicate that some men retreat from admitting that they were part of the initial decision to marry by describing it as a cultural rather than a personal event, which is a convincing and realistic explanation.

Some men did say that they married because they wanted to have a family life.

Ralph:

"I always wanted a family of my own."

Alasdair:

"Family life - I did feel a sort of pull."

Julian:

"It's very strong that social picture of the family and I'm sure I was as influenced by that as anybody else is."

The reluctance and an unwillingness to discuss marriage often ten or 15 years after the event indicates that perhaps at that stage of their lives it really was difficult for some men to remember why they married. It is also part of our cultural myths that men do not want to marry and women trap them into it. Part of the hesitation might be explained by male bravado.

Once the interview moved into present relationships with wives and ex-wives there was a far greater willingness to discuss their current family life especially their relationships with their wives as mothers.

Equality in marriage

For some men there was a commitment to equality within the relationship and many men maintained that there was no necessity for their wives to stay at home with the children.

Gerald:

"I don't think it's been necessary for Kate to be at home. Not at all."

Chris maintains there is greater equality between him and Rose as the children get older.

Chris:

"I think over the last few years things have probably got better and better as far as sharing things in the house and sharing the children."

Matthew believes life could be organised differently.

Matthew:

"I don't see why not - Terri didn't have to stay at home."

And this is echoed by Raymond.

Raymond:

"Of course things could have been worked out in a different way - both in jobs and doing childcare."

Dennis certainly believes that in principle parents are interchangeable.

Dennis:

"I think in terms of roles from the child's point of view, yes. In terms of certain people, they are not, there is no way in which

certain couples would ever be able to swap roles without a disastrous effect on the children because they are incapable of making the necessary adjustments. In principle, yes, apart from weaning young babies, I can't see any reason at all why mothers have to be in the house and fathers have to be out, or vice versa. Not in our kind of society. Completely arbitrary I think."

Women want to stay at home

So if this organisation is 'arbitrary', how did the division of labour in almost all these families come to reflect the usual organisation of life in our society with women staying at home in full-time childcare and men in paid work?

Some men attribute this to a commitment by the wife to give up employment for childcare.

Dennis believes in equality, but Peggy has stayed at home for 12 years and he suggests that it was her choice to do so.

Dennis:

"I think Peggy would have been reluctant to try and combine young childrearing with work. Quite possibly if we had agreed to swap roles right from the start it would have worked out equally well."

So Peggy's commitment to motherhood inhibited the idea of a role-swap, which turned out to be fortunate for Dennis who described himself as 'an obsessive worker'. However Peggy's commitment to motherhood was shaky at the start because she felt she had made a mistake and was very depressed.

Michael says that Rachael has not regretted giving up work.

Michael:

"Rachael gave up work when Alex was born. I don't think she regretted it."

Rachael herself did not say she regretted giving up work, although her commitment was not totally positive.

Rachael:

"I have enjoyed the children but I'd like to get back to work soon."

Janet stays at home with the children and Jeffrey appreciates her decision not to work. However if she had wanted to continue in her paid work she would have needed his consent.

Jeffrey:

"I might have agreed to her working if Janet felt all these other provisions had to be made (so she could work). I'd probably have gone along with it. But Janet had a fairly strong conviction that for those sort of initial years she ought to be there with them most of the time."

That again turned out to be fortunate for Jeffrey as he had described himself as another 'obsessive' worker. He was surprised at how well Janet was able to fit into the role of wife and mother.

Jeffrey:

"And I thought she would find that very difficult to subdue her personality in that way. I have never seen her as a sort of personality that was easily subduable. So that has been quite a bit of an eye-opener, the way she has been able to adapt to that sort of situation. I think Janet gets a lot out of it, enjoys it. I mean, yes, getting tired and very frustrated and so on and basically not alienated from that particular role. Wanting a lot of support in it and not feeling that that wasn't the role for her and nowhere near a total rejection of it. I know it's made it a bit easier for me."

Jeffrey's appreciation of Janet and her ability to adapt is not altruistic. The more responsibility Janet undertakes the less Jeffrey has to take for domestic organisation and childcare.

Raymond also felt that Carole was committed to childcare in the early years.

Raymond:

"That was the way she wanted it... Carole said she was going to be there."

A minority of the mothers had not wanted to stay at home with small children but circumstances forced them into that role. Kate gave up her job when David was ill. Jenny gave up her job when the demands of Alex's work became too great for him to take his share of childcare. Mary gave up her work to stay at home with the children when Julian's job began to take him travelling round the world. In adversity or situations where a choice must be made between her paid work and his, his job does seem to take priority.

Very few of the women in this community go out to work with young children under five. Many of the men not only applaud this devotion to maternal duty, but believe the logistics of women working makes life difficult for men. The same men who believe in domestic equality may also be committed to a normal family life with a person at home with the children. This is Gerald's position exactly.

Realising the inequalities between himself and Kate, Gerald tries to unravel how it is that she finishes up at home with the children.

Gerald:

"Kate did not have to be at home... but my feeling is that, having one person at home... or a very limited number of people at home, who have always been there, probably is beneficial. We've got friends where both parents work hard, long hours. Their children come out of nursery and go to playgroup... It seems quite tough on the children actually... really deep down it's not my view of the way I would like my kids to be. It's very different."

Kate did not have to stay at home but somebody had to be there. As he and Kate both give his job priority it was inevitable that it would be her. The needs of children in Gerald's analysis obscure the needs of men. If children need a parent at home and either parent will do, then Gerald could do it. But with three children, Gerald needs a wife at home to be a man at work.

Many of the men talk about equality but maintain a strong vision of family life which seems to necessitate a wife at home. Ralph has not wanted his children to go into nurseries.

Ralph:

"It's not my idea of how young children should be cared for. They are better off at home up to about three years."

However Ralph did not give up his job for three years so it was fortunate that Meg was willing to do so.

Alex points out that the more children you have the more complicated the childcare.

Alex:

"One's at school, one's at nursery and one's in the pram. Jenny spends all day walking round picking them up and dropping them off."

So would Alex be prepared to do it instead of Jenny?

Alex:

"In the end it comes down to money. She can't earn what I can earn - like it or not."

At the moment it does seem to suit most men if childcare in the early years falls on the women. Harry knows about substitute childcare but does not want it for his children.

Harry:

"If the parents have the sort of jobs which can provide the back-up, financially, to actually operate that situation successfully, I think that can work, but I think that the children may suffer a bit from that. It depends on the individual situation and the personalities of the people involved. But certainly I would feel very nervous about it. I wouldn't want that to happen in my family."

Harry, it seems, believes that mothers should stay at home with their children until they are 12 years old.

Harry:

"If both parents are working when the children are still under 12, it's very difficult. I would regard that as difficult. Because the amount of time they are on their own, and the lack of supervision and the kids coming home to empty houses, and all that sort of thing, I think is very undesirable."

Harry has resisted the idea of Hazel working in the morning during the time when Jane is in the playgroup.

Harry:

"It's happening to a certain extent now, but on a very limited basis, when Hazel is out in the morning, but I mean there are ways around that. I think children do need a certain amount of, not implicit supervision, they need to know that people are there, that's part of the reassuring environment."

So what happens in Harry's family? Is he there when the children come home?

Hazel:

"I do it because I'm here and he's not."

Anything which makes men's investment in their careers more difficult makes them apprehensive. For example, two careers in one family would be difficult to manage. Dennis explains this.

Dennis:

"There is an awful tension you get when both man and woman, having very important careers, both thinking it's desperately important that they stay where they are because if they don't they will fall off the conveyor belt and never get back on in certain jobs. We didn't have to face that kind of possibility."

Attitudes to women's employment

Recently, since all the children have been at school Dennis has encouraged Peggy to find a job, so far to no avail. He is not thinking in

terms or 'a career', but rather an interest. Dennis suggests "perhaps something to do with gardening - she likes that".

Jeffrey also sees Janet going back to work once all the children are at school.

Jeffrey:

"Since we've had the children it is painting that she had to give up and in terms of her own development as a person I don't think she sees that to lie in a career, she sees it to lie in the sort of activities which she enjoys, which are not actually careers like art and painting and things like that - that's where she gets her fulfilment and satisfaction. So I think as soon as the twins are full-time the easel will be out again and she'll earn a bit of money at it."

Malcolm has also periodically suggested to Anna that she go back to teaching although Anna has never done so. He suggests some part-time work as the ideal.

Malcolm:

"That would help the cash-flow and keep Anna up to date."

Hazel has done proof-reading and indexing which Harry approves of because she is at home when Jane comes back from nursery and now from school. Hazel has said that her work in the antique shop has made him far more anxious.

Brigit has been a childminder for a number of years although she had previously been a deputy head. As the children have grown older she had not returned to work as his job has meant a considerable amount of travelling. They spent a year in Hawaii and a year in Spain. How does Alasdair see Brigit's future employment?

Alasdair:

"We have had to be flexible so Brigit could not really take a job where she was terribly committed. We've enjoyed the little children in and out. I know she will go back to teaching but first we must stabilise in one country."

Brigit's future employment depends therefore on Alasdair's university contracts.

Not all of these men are unprepared to support their wives in finding a job. Chris knows Rose gets depressed with nothing to do.

Chris:

"If Rose has to find work or go on a course or something, because she is okay while she has got something to enjoy like that. If she is totally out of work she starts getting really down then. I think that what I was really meaning by the problem, if you always do one task 100% of the time as opposed to 99% then inevitably that it's going on and on and on creates depression."

Chris's mother always worked throughout his childhood and in any case Rose is well organised with housework. Her hours as a teacher are shorter than his and she can arrange after-school childcare briefly until she is home to cook a meal. His support for her as a working woman does not cost him a tremendous amount.

John is very aware that without Liz's income as a librarian, life would be impossible. Their standard of living would drop.

John:

"It's been necessary for Liz to work because my income has not been very reliable. Both the boys are at school so that is not such a problem."

Josephine also works full-time but Barry thinks that Tom, their eldest child, does suffer.

Barry:

"Maybe Tom is not getting as much. Yes, I think Tom could have a lot more put into him than I give him and I think if he had more put into him he could soak it up and he could soak it up from Jo, she would probably be teaching him a little more. He's a bit behind on reading and things. Having played it down like a teacher does, not wanting to interfere with the school curriculum, it's gone a bit too far."

If Tom does not learn to read, Jo is going to be to blame. Barry's support has reservations for Jo as a teacher and mother.

For all these men, his career and his work remain an important priority together with the needs of young children for high quality maternal care. This ordering of priorities finds men in paid employment and women at home with the children.

Many men try to incorporate ideas about equality into their discussions of the family. They suggest that there is no inevitability about this division of labour and yet a few sentences later it is clear that they do not approve of nursery schools, or they could not give up their work, or they believe that there must be somebody at home full-time. All this implies the necessity of a wife at home. These contradictions mean that most women do not get support to stay at paid work when they have young children.

The ambivalence about women in employment continues once the children are at school. Women in careers make difficulties in the family, principally for the men. Therefore many men see women returning to jobs which will give them an interest and a bit of money rather than becoming a career.

Divorced fathers

For the divorced fathers on the Denton Estate, the organisation of life depends on whether the children live with him or with the mother.

Robert's three children live with him so his relationship with his wife is rather different from those fathers who see their children every other weekend. When Robert's wife left him the young children, they were given free nursery school places in the state nursery to allow him to

continue to work as a lecturer in economics. His salary enabled him to pay for help with housework and extra childcare.

Robert:

"It wasn't easy but I survived."

Now he's remarried and lives in a two-adult, six-child household in a large house on Denton Avenue.

Max's eldest daughter has lived with him since she was nine, when her mother left to live in India. The hardest and most restricted period of childrearing was already over but Max took his duties seriously.

Max:

"I felt she needed the security of me being absolutely dependable."

Fortunately for Max as a university lecturer he was able to fit childcare into his timetable and remain an obsessive worker.

Max's second wife Brenda left him when his daughter Ellie was one year old.

Max:

"It's taken five years to be able to see her without shaking, without wanting to kill her. She's not a bad mother to Ellie. But she's so neurotic. She's so totally unself-critical. I don't let myself hate her any more. It wouldn't be good for Ellie if her parents hated each other. For Ellie I try to be solid and reliable. Life here is stable. That's what I try to give her. Stability."

Max did not find it easy to be parted from Ellie.

Max:

"I found it hurt deeply not to see her every day. I've got used to it now."

Neil echoes some of these feelings. Neil's children live with their mother Tess. He sees them once a week.

Neil:

"I suppose since we've split up I've had to let the children go. I've thrown myself into my work. Before I used to say I worked for them. Now I know I'm working for me. Sometimes I leave the house at eight am and get back at nine... I'm more pragmatic about the children now. When they're here I enjoy them. When they've gone I forget about them. I must or I couldn't bear it."

How does he feel about Tess?

Neil:

"I'm sorry. I'm very sorry that she's so angry. I don't really know why. I know everything is changing. When we lived like that it seemed right. Now I can see it wasn't alright but it's too late... I also think she's a mess - I mean she can't bear the children to be away. They are a prop for her. I don't think that is very good for them."

Paul sees his children every weekend and in the week. He remarried after his divorce from Sandra.

Paul:

"I think of myself as sharing the children with Sandra. I miss them terribly when I'm away. They're here a lot and I really appreciate that."

His new wife Gaynor does all the cooking and most of the fetching and carrying of children so Paul's share of childrearing is not overwhelming. Paul believes that he has a decent relationship with his ex-wife Sandra.

Paul:

"How can you hate someone when you lived with them all that time and shared so many things? We are tied together through the children and it is better for them if we can be friends."

John, however, does not feel so warm towards Ellen.

John:

"Actually I hate her now and I can't see that changing. I feel very very bitter."

Relations between ex-spouses are very varied. The four former married couples are all very different in their feelings towards one another although, apart from John, there is a willingness to get on, if only at a superficial level for the sake of the children.

These fathers all pay child maintenance and see their children regularly so that although the relationship with the children contains longer spaces they all have established warm, loving, continuous relationships.

7) The Male Career

The career is the area where these middle class men saw their creativity and energy deployed. For this reason undoubtedly he values and supports his wife in her role as mother. She gives him a resource system which is invaluable for his career and enables him to enjoy his children.

Fatherhood remains a relationship which is based on absence. This can be viewed positively as by Lummis in his historical perspective on fatherhood:

"At the turn of the century many men worked long hours which entailed their absence from the family: for most of the day that was not a rejection of fatherhood but a necessary element of it." (Lummis 1972)

He omits to mention that for many women this was also a necessary element of motherhood. Many women also had to take paid employment out of the home.

The arrangement whereby the father is absent and the mother is present is a problem for a society ostensibly committed to equality in that the lives of women and men remain very different. This model of fatherhood relies on motherhood as its complement to enable the man to be free of

domestic responsibilities in order to work in the world. Men can be fathers because women are mothers.

For the men of the Denton Estate anything which makes their investment in their careers more difficult makes them apprehensive. For example two careers in one family would be difficult to manage.

Dennis:

"There is an awful tension when you get both man and woman having very important careers, both thinking it's desperately important that they stay where they are because if they don't they will fall off the conveyor belt and never get back on in certain jobs. We didn't have to face that possibility."

Peggy had decided to leave work for motherhood. Dennis admits to being an obsessional worker and must have found his home resources very useful once Peggy recovered from her depression, which she thinks was a regret at 'perhaps having chosen the wrong thing'. Of course, irrespective of the needs of children women at home are essential to career men. As I discussed on the section on men and careers the idea of a career presupposes a wife at home.

Male involvement with careers

All the men in this study are very involved with their work and even if they experience a job as tiring it can still be enjoyable. Gerald changed jobs and found his new work to be challenging and stimulating.

Gerald:

"This job has been a tremendous strain in a sense. You think 'Oh God, how do I see this one through?' But also I've thoroughly enjoyed it because it's offered me challenges that I didn't have before, which I wasn't getting in my previous job. That's always been very satisfying for me. I got a lot out of that aspect of change."

He has moved from research into school teaching, and found the first year very exhausting. This coincided with his small son's convalescence from his operation.

Gerald:

"The first year of teaching is a dead loss. The satisfaction comes afterwards, having survived it, but it's pretty terrible at the time and domestically it was horrendous. But I think it was an odd time, actually, David had just got out of hospital and I had a sense, 'right, let's concentrate on this damn job now, and get that cracked', and it didn't work out like that at all."

This decision to concentrate on the job left Kate stranded at home coping with a small sickly child. They all survived, the marriage survived and fortunately the work got easier. Gerald says "I've got a nice job now which I enjoy very much". He is working on a school science project which will end soon. Then he feels it will be time to move on in his career.

Gerald:

"It's my immediate ambition to see that through and that will be very satisfying. The idea then is to move off for a better position. I'll have all that behind me. I'll have to write applications. I'm not terribly excited about that at the moment, partly because I am committed by what I am doing right now, actually. Nevertheless, I have this idea of being head of department. I feel I can't see myself staying as assistant teacher without any sort of unusual responsibilities as I've got at the moment."

For Gerald part of the motivation behind applying for jobs is to maintain his present level of pay and responsibility once the project in his school is finished. At that point he will return to his ordinary teaching post. Gerald puts a lot of time and effort and commitment into his work.

Dennis also works very hard, as a lecturer, often working through the weekend. He says "I do a 24-hour a day job". He is often away or works late. How does he explain this ability to work so hard? He suggests that he has been very influenced by his puritanical upbringing.

Dennis:

"I think it's a kind of tension. I'm sure that my upbringing, which was very puritanical, or perhaps Protestant rather than puritanical, has left me with this moral feeling, that I know is wrong - I just can't get rid of it - of having to work very hard to justify my existence. So, in a sense, I'm driven by an uncontrollable, moral urge to do this thing, and to achieve, and so on."

Dennis is very aware that perhaps he does not really need to work so hard and could have a more relaxed life doing some of the things he enjoys like gardening.

Dennis:

"Whereas the other half of me is saying, 'Damn it all. Why don't you just give it all up and settle down?'... inside I'm just perfectly happy being at home with the family. Sort of just doing enough work to earn a few pennies for a few crusts and enjoying things like being able to work, when the weather is nice, in the garden - that sort of thing."

However it is a problem which he cannot quite resolve.

Dennis:

"In some ways I wish I could finally persuade myself that I don't have to achieve things in order to 'justify my existence', to feel I am going to die reasonably happy and content. And I can't quite sort it out..."

Alex is also a lecturer and is also a compulsive worker and if he does not have any problems to solve he has to create them.

Alex:

"There are times when everything seems to be running very smoothly, yes, life is an absolute bore for me and I have to think of what I can create that will actually make me come alive in the mornings."

Alex is a hyperactive person who sleeps very little, and work can almost literally, as Dennis suggests, expand to fill 24 hours out of 24.

Alex:

"Sleep perhaps occupies the space from one in the morning until six. Then I'm up. Sometimes I go into the department - gives a new meaning to 'an early start' doesn't it?"

Many of the men in this study seem to work very hard. Matthew heard a discussion recently on the radio about how men are more creative than women because they do not produce children. He vigorously denies this, yet almost at once, implies that there may be some truth in it.

Matthew:

"I heard somewhere... I think it's the sort of thing you hear on the radio that sticks in your mind, there is absolutely no truth in it whatsoever, but because men don't have children, men are driven to go and create in other ways. That women, maybe, have slightly less creative urge... The point is I have to feel I am creating things. I have to feel, I have to be able to look at things and say 'I made that' but 24 hours after I have made it, I have lost total interest in it."

Dennis finds writing books a great source of happiness.

Dennis:

"Writing books is incredibly creative. It wouldn't matter whatever they were about, just so happens I write about what I know. And I feel I couldn't write anything else, without sort of mastering another subject. It's just my way of feeling happy. Alongside other things. But I mean I have to do that as well as the other things."

Alex also has a similar experience. He likes work intensively for long periods.

Alex:

"But I work very intensively then stop. I can't work slowly, I couldn't write for two hours a day, I have to write 15 hours a day almost, at least, in my mind. Because I can't stop. It's all there, bubbling. I can't control it until it's finished."

This brings Marion Glastonbury's work to mind because in her discussion of the works of great authors she argues that "the expression of oneself necessarily entails the subordination of others". (Glastonbury

1978, p.30). This kind of work over a 15-hour period must mean that somebody else takes responsibility for housework, shopping and care of the children. Inspiration and creativity are helped considerably by having a wife to do the chores because "the life of the mind must be physically sustained" (Glastonbury op cit).

Harry also finds writing a creative and stimulating experience. He is an art historian and spends time on research followed by writing up the material.

Harry:

"You wonder if you will really succeed every time... and it doesn't come naturally, and I find writing extremely heady stuff. It's very difficult. The research is moderately straightforward, so long as you can get it right, and you can modify it as you go along, that's not very taxing. When it actually comes to writing it, that's really difficult. But if you get it right, it's very exciting. So life has a sort of even pace, for sort of three years, and then there are two years of absolute hell putting it together."

Harry's work has always been time-consuming but recently his commitments have increased and he admits that this is because he enjoys the work. His home improvement programme has ceased.

Harry:

"Work has become much more time-consuming of late. When Jane was smaller, I was more involved in the house and things, and I hardly do anything at all now. I think that's just the way that the job has developed really."

LH:

"Has that involved a commitment to work, an increasing commitment?"

Harry:

"Yes. I try to keep it down, as it were, but it is there, I mean, there is a commitment to work."

LH:

"Where does that come from? Because you like it, or because it's pushed on to you?"

Harry:

"Yes. I like it."

LH:

"So you are doing something you like every day?"

Harry:

"Yes, well, nothing is perfect... but, yes, I do it because I believe in it. Yes."

Harry has not been very involved in household domestic labour and Hazel has been available to maintain the family. Recently she has wanted to return to paid employment herself and had to struggle against Harry's view of her as 'a wife'. With his increasing workload Harry seems to prioritise his own life and work over Hazel's. As he is busy and unavailable, the domestic chores fall even more heavily on her.

Some of these men do manage to balance home and work. Raymond enjoys his work in public relations but can spend plenty of time at home.

Raymond:

"I enjoy it very much indeed. I am very lucky I have got a job which I enjoy immensely and it's very stimulating and fulfilling, but doesn't take up an enormous amount of my time either, so that I don't have to work long hours."

This is not the experience of all the men on the estate. Chris (the civil engineer) points out the negative aspects of a career. Whether or not men really want to spend their time in paid employment it does take up most of their lifetime.

Chris:

"I know a lot of men (myself included) have the depressing thought that they have got to keep going, to work day after day for the next 30 or 35 years or whatever, until they reach retirement age. It's the same thing but probably worse with housework I suppose."

Chris does think of his paid work as 'a career' and suggests his commitment is necessary because the family need his income and this must grow as their needs grow.

Chris:

"We are materialistic and we need the money - ever increasing amounts of money. We appreciate the money, so it's necessary from that point of view to advance financially."

He fantasises about having a skill and working with his hands, but realises that this may not be as fulfilling as he imagines and would not bring in the same income.

Chris:

"I like to think I'd love to go out and be a cabinet-maker or something with my hands - but the grass is greener - may be true - I might like it and I might not - I don't know and at the moment I don't get the chance because we've got this materialistic way of life and a mortgage."

Chris has to be committed and enthusiastic about his job "otherwise I'd crack up". He admits that his work occupies a lot of mental space both when he is at work and when he is at home, "I'm a mild workaholic".

Like Dennis he has a conscience and pushes himself to do a good job and he cannot just let the work slide.

Chris:

"I never seem to be able to cope entirely with what I am supposed to do at work in practical terms. And I can't resist, ultimately I can't say 'no I'll let it slip, it's not important'. You know I just have got that conscience within me I suppose to do the job properly at work."

Sometimes the job expands so that it takes over home life and all day at work. Then Chris has to re-assess his priorities because Rose also works full-time and is not available to provide a complete resource system.

Chris:

"It does conflict from time to time. I've threatened to leave jobs because they were starting to get a problem in the home. Because I mean that just makes everybody unhappy, including me."

In Chris and Rose's life, his work seems capable of expanding to fill up every moment. Chris refers to 'conscience' which echoes Dennis' 'moral feeling' that work justifies his existence. Fulfilment comes from work and career.

Chris:

"I suppose that's it. I have a desire for fulfilment, even if I may spend long periods of time festering in front of the TV or whatever. I think I'm really much happier if I am actually achieving something; doing something, somewhere."

Again like Dennis and Alex, despite attempts to balance energy between the family and work, Chris spends a lot of time working. Rose herself complained frequently during the period of this study that he is unavailable, preoccupied.

For Martin, his work as a deputy head in a junior school has a moral and religious dimension. As a Christian he feels that the opportunity he has was given by God and he must make the most of it.

Martin:

"Work - it's a thing I have to do to keep a family going - but it's also a thing that I feel as a Christian it's something you know, I believe that I am meant to be there and it's fulfilling for me. I feel especially humble that I have got this post, you know, so I enjoy it, I find it challenging but I feel that that's where God wants me, so I feel that it's not a chore but it's something that I enjoy..."

This religious thread brings family and work together for Martin.

Martin:

"How does that relate to me in my different roles? It brings them together. It makes sense of everything in my life."

Jeffrey, now a professor, does not have a cohesive view of his life and work. His wife Janet insists that he takes some share in family life and this forces him to constantly consider his priorities.

Jeffrey:

"It's very difficult for me to tread the middle way in things and I think that's checked, I mean there's a balance imposed there really, by Janet who quite strongly doesn't let me get away all the time with that obsession about work."

He even admits that his obsession about his work can be counterproductive.

Jeffrey:

"It's bad for me to get too obsessional. I think it's good to level a bit but what happens is that I can become so obsessional that I am not even working constructively any more, just driving myself on and on just totally fruitless. So the fact that you've got some checks on that is a good thing."

Barry, the antique restorer, has to work in the evenings and on Saturday to make up for not being 'at work' in the afternoons. He is afraid to let the work slide in case Jo is unemployed.

Barry:

"I work Saturdays, nearly always on Saturdays to try to make up, because all the time I'm feeling I'm trying to make up the full week and I must keep a good turnover going so that if Jo ever stops I can carry on and still get a living wage in, if I pedal too softly now the business might run down too much so..."

LH:

"So it's actually a full-time job, but you just don't work in the afternoons?"

Barry:

"Yes, because I work every evening, have done for ages."

His workshop is at the side of the house and he takes calls and orders in the morning only. He admits reluctantly to customers that his afternoons

are mainly taken up with childcare. He worries about appearing unprofessional.

Barry:

"A lot of people, the customers, realise that something's up because here is Sam in the afternoons if they come round. I just tell them 'my wife's teaching and I have the children in the afternoon'. And so I have to admit it even professionally and again I've got no hang-ups about it except it looks a bit unprofessional and I'm only sorry that I can't be completely businesslike all day."

He does not like the evenings to be disturbed with phone calls although he may continue to work.

Barry:

"And although I work in the evenings I get very grumpy if people phone me up in the evening - they say 'Do you restore antiques?' and I say 'I do but not at this time of night'."

Although he is working, the telephone disturbs the privacy of family time.

Barry certainly does not think of himself as a house-person.

LH:

"What's the difference between you and the housewife?"

Barry:

"I think having the work, you know, it is a great release and I am able to do quite a bit of that."

For Barry his work provides an identity. It is an anchor in his life. He does not think of himself as a housewife. His work is the extra dimension.

For Malcolm, the solicitor, work provides a strong identity as it does for all the men in this study. Malcolm admires some of the other men in the area who have 'tolerable achievements' at work.

Malcolm:

"One's identity in one's work is quite interesting... In an area like this, there really are people with tolerable achievements in their own

sphere, whatever they decided to make it, I think. Less so, perhaps, for a woman, but I think for a man, your identity is very strongly linked up with what you do."

Malcolm spends a lot of time in the office although he suggests that he forgets about work when he is at home.

Malcolm:

"Inevitably, it occupies a lot of my time. I don't think it occupies a lot of my thoughts, apart from when I'm doing it, but it takes a lot of time."

His own father was an accountant and Malcolm had decided not to follow him into the family business.

Malcolm:

"I didn't want to work with my father because I had contempt for money then in a way that, perhaps, I don't now. As you grow older, you realise that you have to have the stuff. And also the idea that I was going to do something more socially useful than what he did. And so I suppose that's why I did that (became a solicitor)."

A number of other men echoed the importance of feeling that their job is worthwhile, that it is intrinsically valuable.

Julian, who is an editor, travels worldwide for his publishing company, meeting authors.

Julian:

"Encouragement to produce the book is often crucial. It's satisfying to see something through from beginning to end. Bring something to life."

Simon also suggests that his work is important. As an architect in the engineering department of the university he feels he helps to temper some of the worst excesses of the engineers.

Simon:

"You can't ignore good design. Asking whether a bridge or a building will stay up for 20 years is not the only aspect of the work and that's where I come in."

The only two men in the study with jobs which are concerned with manual work are Peter, who is a decorator, and John, who is a potter. Peter prides himself on the running of an efficient, speedy decorating business and he is very aware of the necessity of continuity at work.

Peter:

"As a decorator you're doing something which people can do themselves so you have to be a bit better than them. At least what I do is useful and improves people's lives."

Although John is a potter he cannot earn a living at that alone so he also works in the local psychiatric hospital as a support helper and untrained nurse. He does not think of his life in terms of a career but sees himself as an artist.

John:

"The pottery is my expression. The hospital work pays the bills - just."

John's wife, Liz works full-time as a librarian and a large inheritance from her family has kept them afloat financially so John has not really had to come to terms with trying to earn large amounts of money. At the moment he can afford to juggle his two jobs.

Although there is a range of attitudes to employment from the men in the area, all the men find an identity through their work. Most of the men in this study could consider their lives in terms of 'a career' - only Peter, John and Barry are exceptions to this because they are all self-employed, all in jobs involving physical labour and some creativity. However, men's identity may be tied up with their work, whether or not it could be described as 'a career'. Other writers have investigated this. The lads in Paul Willis' study, 'Learning to Labour' (1977), became the

macho men they admired who worked at men's work which was not of the sort usually described as a career.

Women, with their responsibilities for childcare and the need to compete in a society where definitions of success usually exclude them, have far more limited potential as careerists.

The recession between 1984 and 1987 brought about a crisis at work because promotion and climbing the career ladder are no longer an inevitable process for the younger man especially in careers like teaching. This is still continuing to some extent. It is a crisis because some men are now experiencing the immobility which has always circumscribed the work life of women. Fortunately for the men in this study, the recession has not affected their jobs. Most have careers which are relatively flourishing. For that reason, the relationship between professional and private life is a real issue for all of them. The lives of many of these families are organised around male work commitments.

Other authors have also been interested in the relationship between male careers and family life.

This relationship between the professional and private life has been the subject of study by Evans and Bartholome. As on the Denton Estate they find a strong commitment of men to their jobs. They explain their research as a concern with the way priorities are organised and choices are made between career and home.

"The issue addressed... is that of the relationship between professional and private life. In the affluent society, this is a major concern for a growing number of people - for managers and those in the liberal professions in particular. Fewer people work simply to earn a living. Most aspire to an exciting and meaningful work life and an equally fulfilling and interesting private life. Since time and energy are limited resources, choices have to be made. The relationship between professional and private life has to be managed." (Evans and Bartholome, in Derr 1980, p.281).

Interestingly 'people' here only means men. This research is about the relationship between professional men and their wives - 'private life' therefore means wife and family.

They undertook a study of French managers and their wives. In these interviews Evans and Bartholome talked to men whose work dominated their lives. In summarising interview material with young managers, they explain how career is prioritised over family.

"If tension appears in the marriage, then his dilemma is the following: not 'how can I resolve that tension so as to regain a gratifying private life?', but 'how can I pursue my career without destroying my family life?' To the frustration of many of the wives, it is the career that is number one in the mind of the young manager."

Evans and Bartholome showed how the wives gave their husbands' careers priority by being prepared not to work themselves, and to constantly 'adjust'. They quote one manager's wife:

"I have to adjust to my husband's moods. When he feels like making love, I'm expected to be instantly loving, sexy and available. But during the long periods when he doesn't feel like making love, I'm expected to fade into the background. I have to be dependent on him when he wants me to be dependent, when he is aware of my presence. At other times, I have to lead my own independent existence." (Evans and Bartolome, p.297).

Fortunately managers and their wives both agree that his work is the priority. Men must enjoy work to be at all fulfilled.

"If I didn't work as hard, I'd be much less satisfied. I'd be miserable when I'm at home and things would be even worse than now." (in Derr, op. cit.)

The home is viewed as 'a haven', which is how many of the managers described it. However, these men's participation may be limited by their preoccupation with their work to the detriment of family life, Evans and

Bartolome suggest. The manager escapes to the home but has little to offer to the other members of the family.

Gaynor Cohen dealt with this issue in her research on the 'Green Lea Housing Estate'. She was looking at the family life of 42 couples. Many of the husbands were managers. Although their work is different from the men on the Denton Estate, their commitment to their jobs is similar, and their wives end up providing domestic resources just like many of the wives in this study. Many of Gaynor Cohen's husbands are 'organisation men' and are away from home often at periods which 'coincide[s] with the most demanding phase in the family cycle' (p.153).

Because these husbands are frequently absent the women have to make their own support groups on the estate, which is also the case on the Denton Estate. Gaynor Cohen has a view of life in 'Green Lea' which is husband dominated and where the wife must be prepared to fit in with his career needs. This creates tension for the wife.

Steve Edgell in his study of middle class families also points to domination of family life by the male career and suggests the men in his study were very attached to their jobs and that this was a source of their identity - 'it had great personal significance for them' (Edgell 1978, p.91).

This commitment of men to their work influenced every aspect of life, from decisions about the time of meals to where to live. As in families on the Denton Estate, Edgell found that women also supported the male career priorities and were prepared to organise family life around their husband's job. This is also the subject matter of Janet Finch's book 'Married to the Job'. She discusses the incorporation of wives into men's work as unpaid helpers. She makes the point that many women, even apart from obvious categories like curates' wives and diplomats' wives, are also involved in

supporting their husband's work by organising domestic resources to fit in with his timetable. She suggests that although men and employers benefit from this, it is not so easy to understand what women themselves derive from this arrangement.

On the Denton Estate many of the fathers continue to spend long periods at work and this was not necessarily undesirable to them, although some men disagreed. Their identities as men are strongly tied to paid employment. This is not simply work, but for most of them 'a career'. It embodies the expectation of 'getting on' in a job which is interesting and stimulating. When they talk about their work the men really come alive. Work provides a challenge, legitimates ambition and imposes a meaning on life.

Any debate on the changing nature of fatherhood cannot omit the dimensions of work and responsibility. The changes in fatherhood must refer to times when men are not working - after six or at the weekend. It is the nature of almost all male work that no allowance is made for male childcare responsibilities. This is an acknowledgement that men do not take the responsibility either for childcare or for housework. When they do anything out of the male stereotype they are congratulated.

In her work on male writers Marion Glastonbury reviews some of the physical work men have undertaken.

"Tolstoy made boots, Ruskin swept rooms, Thoreau cut logs and cooked meals, William Morris fried bacon on a camp fire. D.H. Lawrence washed up, George Orwell rolled his own cigarettes, Robert Graves shelled peas." (Glastonbury 1979, p.45).

She suggests that these projects have very little to do with the routine domestic work which women undertake as mothers and wives engaged in maintaining lives.

"... But these are freely chosen experiments, self-affirming holiday projects, which demonstrate a gratifying versatility where none is expected. At most, they are a gesture towards self-sufficiency; a token of expiation. They have nothing in common with the treadmill of domestic responsibility to which women are born." (Glastonbury, p.45).

If so many of the men in this study are so concerned with work and career, it seems scarcely possible that they are taking an equal share of domestic responsibility, even when they are at home and ostensibly available to do so.

Summary

This section on fatherhood has examined fathers' attitudes to work and to family life. Most fathers in this study continue to view themselves as 'the provider' for the family and the continuing patriarchal organisation of economic life reinforces this view. The full-time working day does not easily accommodate childcare or housework but implicitly assumes that the worker will have 'somebody' at home providing the resources. This somebody is almost invariably the wife. There are creche facilities in very few workplaces. Those that do exist are almost always linked with women's employment rather than men's.

Many of the men suggested that they were initially reluctant to launch into parenthood and their wives precipitated them into family life by deciding to become pregnant. However having become fathers, all the men interviewed are very involved with their children and with very few exceptions build close ties with them. Of the men in this study many have explicit ideas about their children's upbringing and believe that 'somebody' at home is an essential aspect of proper care. On the Denton Estate that person is always the mother.

Although many men suggest that life could be organised differently, it rarely is, and although fathers maintain that the needs of children are uppermost in their thoughts as they consider domestic organisation, the present arrangements in most families also benefit the men. ~~the~~ --

Once the children are older the husbands do encourage their wives back to work, but this encouragement is to take a job as 'an interest', preferably part-time, rather than a career.

Most of these men enjoy their work, give it priority. Many describe themselves as 'obsessional' or 'workaholic'. At home they tend to 'help' with chores because their major responsibilities are out in the world.

The escape from domestic responsibility is facilitated by the career. This is the area where these middle class men saw their creativity and energy deployed. For this reason undoubtedly he values and supports his wife in her role as mother. She gives him a resource system which is invaluable for his career and enables him to enjoy his children. Today the arrangement whereby the father is absent and the other is present is a problem for a society ostensibly committed to equality in that the lives of women and men remain very different.

This model of fatherhood relies on motherhood as its complement to enable the man to be free of domestic responsibilities in order to work in the world. Men can be fathers because women are mothers.

Many of these men will explain their lives using a rhetoric of equality to suggest that they could be interchangeable with their wives. Many also suggest that they take considerable responsibility for some domestic chores or childcare tasks or have done so in the past.

In the next section I shall investigate these claims more closely to look at what it is that women and men undertake as their share of domestic responsibilities.

CHAPTER 8

SPECIAL TOPICS

The last section considered accounts of the nature of motherhood and fatherhood on the Denton Estate. In this section I want to look more closely at some areas of special interest which discuss the inter-relationship of marriage, family life and parental roles. In the choice of these subjects I was influenced by the ways in which I had already considered family life in Chapter One as a financial, legal and heterosexual relationship between two adults which usually involves a specific division of labour, with women being more concerned than men with domestic tasks and childcare. External power relations between women and men in the world are reflected in the internal dynamics of the family. Parental roles are reinforced by expert advice.

In Chapter One I had considered examples of research and writing which aimed to describe the nature of marriage today. There were the time budget studies which investigated the allocation of domestic responsibilities in the home and the time spent on them. There were the studies which looked at the flow of money in the family to see who earned it, who spent it and who controlled it. I also reviewed material on the decision-making process in the family by writers who questioned where the power actually lies within the modern family. The last part of this chapter was concerned with the law and the effect of legal changes on the family. Of special concern was the way legal structures buttress the traditional organisation of the family viewing women as wives and mothers and men as providers.

In the following section I want to return to some of these themes to see how this research material supports or refutes earlier writers. It was my initial intention to follow the sections which I had already developed

in Chapter Two, as I had organised the interviews to build on these themes. However when I analysed the research material two other topics were clearly indicated which deserved closer comment. Firstly the effect of expert advice on the family - mainly through doctors - and secondly sexuality.

This section will therefore discuss negotiations about domestic chores, finance, decision-making, expert advice, sexuality and finally, the law is investigated through some case study material from the couples on the estate who separated and divorced while the research was in progress.

I chose eight couples for detailed interviews. These were people who agreed to be interviewed a second time and I explained the subjects in advance. Some of these couples later separated and they also appear in the case studies on divorce and the law.

1) Domestic Division of Labour

I shall now look at some of the couples to see how negotiations take place concerning the domestic division of labour. I shall consider the division of labour between these couples in some detail first and then go on later to discuss the general implications once all the cases have been described.

Malcolm and Anna

Their house is disorganised, full of clutter and children's toys in every corner. Anna has already said she is 'hopeless' and clearly housework is low on her list of priorities. Malcolm does not do it either.

Anna:

"He works such long hours and he has to drive as well."

To stop the housework piling up, Anna periodically employs a cleaner to do the hard work. Even Malcolm will wash up occasionally. "Once or twice a week," Anna says.

Malcolm's responsibility for childcare is also minimal, although he can be found babysitting many nights of the week while Anna goes out, usually to visit friends. She is a churchgoer and is involved with many projects at the local Anglican church.

I asked him about his involvement with the children when they were babies. He told an interesting story about his time spent with Lois when she was very small.

LH:

"Did you have a lot to do with the children when they were babies?"

Malcolm:

"Well, I had a bit more to do with Lois because we lived in Zambia and Anna had a job. And she had a job where she worked in the mornings, school went on until after lunch, or at least she did her marking or something after lunch. We had only one car in any case. I used to come home and have lunch with Lois and then we would go and pick up Anna and she'd drive me back to work. She would have Lois for the afternoons. I didn't have her for the morning, the servants had her for the mornings. But we had this funny little routine, I mean she didn't talk very much but she and I would have our places laid by the servants and they would come in and bring us lunch and it was left to her and I to get on with it. And so in her limited way she and I talked. We used to have lunch on our own and I quite liked that. And I have not done a similar thing with Esther and anyway back in England you don't have that kind of thing."

According to Anna at the time of this interview Malcolm saw very little of Esther and they did not get on very well. Anna reports, "I think he finds her a bit boisterous."

At the weekend Malcolm's share of childcare activities increased.

Malcolm:

"I try and help some with shared activities at the weekend, go swimming or go for a bicycle ride or something like that."

Although he appreciated all the other children popping in from the estate he felt it was not always good for his children.

Malcolm:

"I have found there are good and bad things about this area. The good thing I suppose is that you have a lot of peers. And you know that there are lots of people with the same kind of interests. The bad thing is that for them and for you in a way they are very rarely left to their own devices, because there is always somebody to play with."

The constant availability of playmates interrupted some of the family projects which Malcolm had in mind.

Malcolm:

"They lose out on introspection and study and don't want to go anywhere in case they miss their friends."

The organisation of domestic responsibility in this family depends upon Anna being at home. She undertakes most of the responsibility for childcare and housework. Malcolm works long hours as a solicitor and depends upon Anna's domestic organisation. Anna sums it up by saying, "he does very little really."

Rose and Chris

Rose and Chris live just along the road from Malcolm and Anna. Their house is immaculate and well organised. After some years at home Rose began to work part-time as an infant teacher and now works full-time.

Chris does believe in team work in marriage.

Chris:

"Marriage has got to be a team effort to survive really."

Does this team effort mean that he takes a share of the domestic responsibilities? Initial indications are that he does. He says that he avoids getting into a rut with his domestic responsibilities by taking it in turns with Rose to bath the children or put them to bed.

Chris:

"If you always put the kids to bed or bath the kids or you always do the washing up or you always do this job or that job it becomes totally and utterly tedious without any kind of relief or end to it."

However despite good intentions, most of the time they do the same job night after night.

Chris:

"I suppose Rose and I, we've got into fairly definite roles along those sort of lines, in the evenings, but it's not 100 per cent of the time, there are odd occasions when one will do the other's which just gives that bit of light in the tunnel so to speak. You are not stuck with doing it all the time. I think if you were then it becomes really tedious. It becomes another pressure."

However this does not make it clear what it is that Chris does as his share of domestic chores and childcare. He admits that he does not help Rose at the start of the day because he gets up late and has to rush to work.

LH:

"Do you spend a lot of time with the children? I mean, what's been the pattern of your day today, when you got up at 7.30 or 8 o'clock?"

Chris:

"Well, this morning I struggled out of bed as usual - this morning I suppose I had very limited contact really with anybody. I saw Tristan, some contact with Jonathan which I always do in the morning anyway, that's inevitable. A brief word with Rose - it really only takes 15 or 20 minutes between actually getting up and being off to work most mornings. There's not a great deal of contact in the mornings."

This is reinforced in some of the time budget studies, which also show that in the morning men are preoccupied with their own concerns. Chris believes

things are better when Rose works. At the time of this interview she was working part-time and this was her morning off.

Chris:

"Mornings are better in some ways really when Rose has to go to work. When she has to work she's got more pressure on and we all get up earlier, we all take our breakfast together and have a lot more contact, so the mornings in some ways are nicer."

Rose did not agree with Chris' analysis of the morning routine. She suggested that he always stays in bed in the morning and even when they both have to get to work the organisation relies on her effort.

Rose:

"His contribution in the morning is always minimal. He never gets up. If I'm working I get the children up and ready and he rolls down about two minutes before he has to leave."

I asked Chris about the work pattern in the evenings. He did not cook or put the children to bed the night of the interview but he was going to wash up.

LH:

"But what about this evening when you get in from work?"

Chris:

"Well, I had a laugh and a joke with Jonathan which I often do when I walk in. He was eating an apple or something, then I saw Tristan and had a little chat with him and then it was tea time. There's no specialist activity until bedtime."

LH:

"Who cooks?"

Chris:

"Rose."

LH:

"Who puts them to bed?"

Chris:

"Rose does. It is usually Rose, but I often sing songs to them when they're in bed."

LH:

"Washing up?"

Chris:

"I shall be doing it when I get back tonight. I usually do it earlier on in the evening, but I shall be doing it when I get back."

In common with the men Ann Oakley studied (Oakley 1972), Chris does the washing up as his main household chore.

Chris:

"Washing up is the main thing, I suppose I do most washing up, in fact nearly all washing up."

He also says that he cooks occasionally, although like all inexperienced cooks he finds problems about getting all the food cooked together at the right moment.

Chris:

"I occasionally even cook a meal. I do some ironing, some hoovering, nearly all window cleaning."

LH:

"Do you like cooking?"

Chris:

"Not really. I don't enjoy it as much as when I was younger, I suppose because I can't cope with it any more, I can't get everything together. I can't synchronise it you know, I finish up with the gravy ready 4 hours before the roast or whatever."

He had successfully cooked the lunch the previous Sunday and it turned out well.

Chris:

"I made a Sunday lunch the other week and much to Rose's amazement it all turned out alright, even the Yorkshire pudding. I think she was a bit annoyed because she can't really make Yorkshire puddings."

However routinely Chris is more likely to gravitate towards building work on the house and the maintenance of the cars.

Chris:

"Well, I look after both cars, which is becoming a big task because Rose is not into car washing. In fact she has never done it I don't think. Until last weekend they hadn't been cleaned since last September. It took me two days to clean two cars... there is a lot of other work - building work to do. I spend a lot of time doing that."

Rose therefore ends up doing most of the housework and the decorating.

Chris:

"I suppose to some degree Rose does more housework as a result, but I don't cop out completely on housework. And Rose does a lot of the decorating. She probably does more of the decorating than I do now."

It does appear that during the week most of the work and responsibility for childcare is left to Rose whether she is employed on supply teaching or not. At the weekend Chris does more childcare.

Chris:

"Last Saturday I went out with Tristan to get a tyre on Rose's car fixed, and she went off with Jonathan to the shops. Sometimes it's like that, sometimes I have the kids while she goes shopping. Sometimes we split them. I don't think there's any set pattern. I am not really aware that Rose absolutely needs to have the kids taken away from her for hours at a time. If she does I have either failed to pick that up or she's failed to mention it, one of the two."

However his next statement rather denied the one above. Every now and again Rose escapes on her own on a Saturday and leaves Chris with the children.

Chris:

"She does have sanity breaks Saturday mornings, now and again. She disappears off to the shop for three or four hours. Even I am not so thick to detect that it's getting away from it all."

Chris believes that there is a certain equivalence of work, although that was not the case in the past.

Chris:

"I don't know, I suppose I could do a lot more round the house than I do in terms of housework, but I would say we both put a fairly equivalent effort during the day. I think. There was a time when I thought it was imbalanced particularly when the kids were much younger, I probably didn't do anything."

He certainly believes their relationship now reflects a greater equality.

Chris:

"I think over the last few years things have probably got better and better as far as sharing the things in the house and sharing the kids. I don't know whether that's partly personal maturity or whether it's the maturing of the relationship so to speak."

When I asked Rose about the breakdown of housework and childcare in her home it was clear that she continued to take most responsibility for both. I questioned Rose in detail about domestic tasks and I shall quote this section of the interview in full as it was recorded, to show how certain key words function in the conversation, like 'help' and especially 'happy'.

LH:

"When you are both at work who is responsible for the children?"

Rose:

"When I am working yes, I do feel I am still responsible for the children..."

LH:

"The food?"

Rose:

"I prepare the food."

LH:

"You cook the food?"

Rose:

"I cook, yes."

LH:

"Shopping?"

Rose:

"Ah! Chris is quite happy to do the shopping - big shops at Sainsbury and what have you - he's perfectly happy to do that, particularly so when I'm working."

LH:

"Does he write the list?"

Rose:

"I write the list because I'm more likely to know what we need as I cook."

LH:

"The housework?"

Rose:

"That's largely me as well, then there again he's quite happy to help particularly when I'm working."

LH:

"Does he notice that the floor is dirty?"

Rose:

"No, I have to ask him."

It is clear that the domestic organisation is left to Rose and Chris works within that. Chris also has his work around the house although

substantially different from the monotony of housework and running a support system.

Rose:

"Even when I am working he is still responsible for things like servicing the car, keeping it clean, because I haven't got a clue about cars. He's also responsible for the house repairs and the changes we want. Putting up shelves: he is able to do things like that, electrical repairs and things like that."

Rose therefore does believe that she and Chris have an equal workload. However she finds the housework to be 'drudgery' and prefers to be out at work.

Rose:

"So I consider we're more or less equal although I do get frustrated sometimes with the housework because it tends to be a bit of drudgery, doing it all the time, which is what I suppose I like about going out to work, because it gives you something else to think about. I suppose I've got fairly high standards. I do get bored at home. There's no doubt about that."

Josephine and Barry

Living on Denton Avenue itself Josephine and Barry have extended their already large Victorian house. The interior of the house is beautifully restored to the original Victorian splendour with a few discreet modern features such as central heating and kitchen gadgetry. Josephine stayed at home with the children for eight years until her youngest child was three. He then went to a nursery every morning. Barry picks him up in the afternoon. He works from home, continuing work during the evening as an antique restorer.

Barry discusses the role swap and suggests that it is rather an illusion because his main contribution is shopping and some childcare.

Barry:

"It looks externally like it because everybody sees me at the school doing the things like collecting the kids and sometimes getting things at the shops, but in fact, I rarely bath the kids and put them to bed because I think Jo finds it a useful time to talk to them and catch up on the day with them. "I'm just sort of too busy."

Barry does take most of the responsibility for getting the children ready for school in the mornings while Josephine concentrates on preparing to go out to work.

LH:

"Can you just tell me the pattern of your day?"

Barry:

"I always get up first just a few minutes before Jo and make sure the kids are up and awake and then they can both dress themselves. Sam's coming up to four now but for nearly all of this year since he was three he could dress himself. I put his clothes out in a row. So I do that. Get them up, at least sitting on the edge of the bed, even if their eyes are half shut, put their clothes out in a row and say 'right get dressed'."

However it transpires that Josephine has already worked all evening to keep the morning routine running smoothly. She washes and sorts the clothes and Barry literally lays them out on the bed.

Barry:

"Mind you, Jo has already sorted out all their clothes. All the clothes on the chair have been, are clean and sorted for the day, so Jo does that after she's bathed them and as she is putting them to bed. So I do literally have to just lay them out 'cos I know that they'll all be there and great confusion if they are not, drawers open and things being turned upside down trying to find pants or whatever."

The children then have their breakfast and Barry takes Tom to school and Sam to the playgroup next door. Jo goes to work.

Barry:

"In the morning I do the routine of the mornings. Jo just gets up and sort of says hello, looks round and goes out, more or less straight away... Then I wash up the breakfast things and we get into the car.

I take Tom to school and I take Sam next door. Which is perfect you know. We're lucky to have a playgroup right next door."

The playgroup runs from 8.45 until 12.30 and these are Barry's working hours.

Barry:

"It's a long morning right up to 12.30. Every minute counts and I tend to collect at the last minute."

Barry then takes care of Sam in the afternoon. If he is lucky Sam will play and Barry can work after lunch. He picks Tom up at 3.30.

Barry:

"I get him some lunch and I sit down as well and read the papers and that can take me through till two, if I start late, you know half past two, something like that and then there's only time just to wash a few things up and go up to school. Afternoons seem to sort of drift. I think sometimes I can do an hour's work between two and three before walking up to school. Sometimes I just work until about one with Sam sort of wandering around."

Barry then picks Tom up from school. Josephine comes home and he goes back to his workshop. Then his childcare and domestic responsibility is over for the day. Barry admits that the housework is Josephine's responsibility. They do have a cleaner but Josephine does the rest.

Barry:

"The house cleaning is all done by a cleaner - we have three hours a week, and in that time she goes right through the house and does everything once a week. But Jo still tends to load the washing machine, hoick it out and hang it up and things. I occasionally put the washing out on the line if it happens that I've had to be there."

Josephine also does all the cooking. During school holidays she cooks and freezes a number of meals ready to eat in term-time when she is working.

Barry:

"She still does all the cooking, doing most of it in the holiday, filling the freezer up with set meals and then she just leaves me detailed instructions on when to turn on the oven and put it in."

Barry cannot cook and he maintains that he would like to try but has not yet managed to learn.

Barry:

"I've offered to do a meal a week but she finds she can't relax coming home and finding that I'm still confronted by some uncooked onion, some uncooked carrots and everything else is still about to be done. She wishes I could do more stews and things so it's actually in the oven beginning to exude a meal smell in the house. Then she could really relax much more."

Barry maintains that he does some tidying up but admits that Josephine often does it in the evening, even tidying Barry's newspapers.

Barry:

"I quite often tidy up, more than Jo realises but if they've been playing later on in the day, after she's put them to bed she comes down and tidies up and occasionally points out how I've left a muddle everywhere. I'm a great one for half-read newspapers all over the place, you know, on the table, in the loo, and everywhere."

Josephine feels that her life is very strenuous. She teaches all day and comes back home to put the children in bed and get ready for the next day. There is very little time when she can really relax.

Josephine:

"My worst pressure from going back to work is that I am never really off-duty. I prepare quite a bit in the evenings before I go to school so then even the evenings are taken up. My whole day is taken up with work or being at home looking after the children. As soon as I come home then I've got the kids then I've got the supper, then I've got the kids again at bath time, because I feel I've missed them and I really ought to read them their story (I might ask Barry to do it occasionally but I really ought to do it myself). Then when I've finished all that it's about 8 o'clock and I come downstairs and prepare for school the next day."

She does not believe that Barry is under the same kind of pressure. He took over some childcare when Sam went to the nursery and rarely has more than one child at a time.

Josephine:

"No. I think his life hasn't changed all that much. I really only asked him to take over at a point at which there wasn't so much pressure on him anyway - because it was only a question of taking the children to school in the morning and he doesn't have Sam again until 12.40 - he's got the morning off. Then he has Sam in the afternoon only - which is never as stressful as when you've got two children quarrelling. Then he has to go and fetch Tom at 3.15. No. I don't think he has had the same pressure at all."

There is also the additional pressure of Barry's work and Josephine has to fit in with his schedule and workload so that he can complete a full working day. This has meant re-assessing childcare and often involves Josephine rarely having time to relax between the end of her teaching day and the beginning of childcare responsibilities.

Josephine:

"We've had to keep re-assessing all the time the way we are sharing out the way we are looking after the children and the period of time that is being allocated to Barry for work. You know he says to me 'I'm not getting the work done. Please make sure you don't disturb me. I can't put the children to bed at the moment and you are not working. Will you make sure you always do it?' We do actually have that type of conversation sometimes or 'Can you please have supper not at 5.30 because I find that is the time I make my phone calls and people are out after 6.00, so I can't get hold of them'. That sort of thing."

Within this family, although there is greater equality about childcare, the remainder of the domestic responsibility is taken by Josephine and this means that her workload is greater than Barry's. With a full-time job and all the domestic responsibility Josephine feels stressed and over-stretched whereas Barry's life is more restful. He knows this.

Barry:

"So the afternoon is fairly restful I suppose and pretty quiet and that's the time when Jo I know would most like to be here as well. She really misses the afternoons. She gets very tired."

Martin and Maria

They live in a well organised house near Denton Avenue. Maria has spent ten years at home but has just taken a part-time teaching job. Martin has just begun a new job as a deputy head in a junior school.

Martin had asked Maria how she had spent her day, and she had been shopping, cleaning up and collecting the children.

Martin:

"I was saying 'what did you do this morning?' and she said 'I got home at 9.15, I spent an hour tidying up and washing up and just clearing up' and then she had to go shopping, then it's time to collect Tim and you know Tim is home and talking to him and amusing him to a certain degree you can't say 'right off you go and play', then she has to fetch Karen, you know, the day quickly goes as she will tell you."

Maria does most of the housework and Martin helps at the weekends although Maria keeps everything straight so that there is not too much left for Martin to do.

Martin:

"Well, when I am at home I do some. I mean, I help and I sometimes will help on a Saturday if someone's coming to supper and it's a dash to get things done and there's lots to do and Maria's doing the cooking, then I will do the housework and help to get the house straight. That's not every week - but I just dig in and do housework at weekends if necessary. I suppose sometimes fairly often at weekends I do something like that."

Once again Martin is 'helping' rather than taking direct responsibility. During the week Martin either washes up or puts his son to bed as his major task.

Martin:

"I help Tim get to bed and read to him at night. Normally he has a story or something; I've done that quite a lot. Just recently - this past term when Tim's been very tired, Maria's tended to take him up and read to him and get him to bed. She reckons it's important to settle him down so he gets his sleep, otherwise he's grotty the next day, which is true."

LH:

"So what do you do while Maria's doing that?"

Martin:

"Wash up - that's what we usually do - we either wash up or put Tim to bed - we take it in turn. As I have said Maria has tended to do that more, but it's a taking-in-turns job."

Because Martin has just started a new job he has a considerable amount of preparation in the evenings and he is also very involved with church activities.

Martin:

"I have work to prepare in the evening maybe... marking, working, planning or doing something or possibly going to the bible study at church or - oh yes, on a Friday night Karen goes to a children's club, so I usually take her and collect her, that's 6.15 to 7.15. Then usually Maria and I sit down and eat together later after the children have gone to bed or Karen has come home."

At this time Maria is prepared to take most responsibility because she knows that Martin is making a major effort in his work.

Maria:

"I keep everything going, food, clothes. I pick up the children."

Because Maria has been at home for a number of years she has the house well organised and everything runs smoothly in her organisation. She does not really expect Martin to undertake the major share of domestic work but feels that she can rely upon him for household repairs and maintenance.

Maria:

"He keeps things going by doing all the repair work and that takes time at the weekend."

Maria herself has just started a new job which is working in the remedial department at a local junior school. Although she takes the work seriously she knows her major effort is for her own family.

Maria:

"I can't ask Martin for more at the moment, but I do get tired, very tired, almost worse now than when they were babies."

The demands of Martin's new job confirms this couple in their old pattern of domestic responsibility which was sorted out while Maria was at home with the children. It is probably unlikely to change until the children are older because Maria is prepared to see herself as a domestic resource, however tiring this may be. Also Martin is an appreciative husband who praises her efforts so Maria does have some reward for all her labours.

Martin:

"She is a very good mother. It is important to her that the children get to school on time and are clean and tidy. She's very good."

Janet and Jeffrey

They live in an immaculate Victorian terrace house on Richmond Road. Inside paintings, rugs and sculpture combine with whitewashed walls and stripped pine floors to create the effect of a villa in Tuscany. Janet and Jeffrey have Denise and their twins. He is a lecturer. She is at home as a housewife. Janet is responsible for all the housework but she expects considerable support with childcare from Jeffrey when he is there.

In the morning Jeffrey is expected to begin the day by making the coffee and getting some biscuits for the twins.

Jeffrey:

"Well, the morning usually starts at somewhere around 6.30-7.45 with the children in the bedroom waking us up. Then I'm shoved out of bed in order to make room for the children - well I'll be shoved out of bed anyway to go and make the coffee. So I go and make the coffee and collect biscuits for the kids because they expect something to eat about 7.00. Then I troop up with the coffee and give them all a biscuit and very often there's arguments - they haven't got a proper biscuit (it's only three-quarters of a biscuit or something like that) and then there is sort of general coffee and biscuits in bed, sort of

communal except Denise now will not wake up at all until you sort of pull her out."

Jeffrey is also supposed to supervise the children having their breakfast while Janet makes the beds and sorts out their clothes ready for school.

Jeffrey:

"Then what happens is Janet gets washed and I am supposed to supervise the breakfast, which is usually fairly chaotic because they insist on really getting their own breakfast which is very messy and I attempt to impose some kind of order on it, so I get breakfast, Janet gets washed and then she goes and makes the beds and things and dresses the kids as they troop away from breakfast."

Jeffrey is also expected to wash up the breakfast things and then he gets dressed before taking the children to school or playgroup. In the evening he rarely eats with the children but either cooks himself something or eats the remainder of their meal. Then he helps to give the twins a bath.

Jeffrey:

"Then I am officially expected home at 5.30 and it's very often 5.45. Then it's expected that I will... what normally happens is I sort of mess around with the kids and very often have something to eat myself rather than eat later in the evening, and I pour the bath and supervise the kids having a bath - wash them, make sure their teeth are done and then the twins go to bed at about 7.00 and Janet takes them up and then I take Denise up at about 7.30 and read her a story. That is sort of a typical pattern."

At the weekends Jeffrey is also expected to take a large share of childcare. He goes off to Sainsbury's, takes the children out to lunch and looks after them in the afternoon.

Jeffrey:

"This weekend I disappeared to Sainsbury's. This week because they've been ill I took the twins to the Little Chef and we had lunch together and did not come back until three. Then I come back and unpack the shopping and they usually 'assist' me and get the supper. On Saturday afternoon it's usually expected of me, I think, that I will take them out somewhere. So in the winter we very often go to the forest or something like that but sometimes if the weather is bad we stay in on Saturday afternoon, the kids watch television or play around... then

it's really the same sort of pattern in terms of bath and bed and so on."

On Sunday mornings he takes them to church. Although they are out of the house Janet does not like having to get them ready to be out at 9 o'clock. Janet cooks the lunch and they go on a family outing in the afternoon. Jeffrey believes that he takes the bulk of childcare responsibility at the weekends.

Jeffrey:

"I don't know whether I do, but I think the theory is that I shoulder the burden (if you can describe it as that) of looking after the kids or a major part of it over the weekend."

Apart from the childcare the remainder of the domestic organisation falls to Janet. She does the household repairs and some building work when necessary. She decorates, she does the gardening, all the cleaning, a lot of the shopping and most of the cooking. Neither of them repair the car which is a rusty heap outside the door.

Jeffrey is also away for long periods, often up to a month at conferences in other countries. Janet does believe that Jeffrey does his share of the childcare when he is at home.

Janet:

"Yes, he does, but of course he's not always here, and often he's thinking about something else even when he is here. I do all the decorating and odd jobs and the garden. That's all me and that's a lot."

When I asked Janet to be more specific about all her tasks she replied -

Janet:

"You can see what I do - everything."

Carole and Raymond

They have moved from just outside the area into a large Victorian semi-detached house on Denton Avenue itself. Raymond is very involved in both housework and childcare. Other women refer to him as a ~~model~~ husband and Carole says she's "very lucky to have him". She has been moving towards part-time work and at the time of this interview was training as a reflexologist.

Raymond maintains that he does more of the housework than Carole.

Raymond:

"I do quite a lot of it. I think I do more than Carole actually."

How do they negotiate the division of labour? Ray says it is 'body language'. It turns out that they have set tasks.

Raymond:

"Well, there is no verbal negotiation, it's all sort of non-verbal body language negotiation. We hardly talk about it at all now. We have been married ten years and it sort of works out, we rarely bother to argue about it. There are certain things I always do, or Carole rarely does. She rarely cleans the bath and she very rarely cleans the toilet."

Raymond also does most of the washing up. Carole does general cleaning work and used to do the ironing though Raymond believes that this is changing.

Raymond:

"If I'm here she hardly ever washes up. She does more hoovering than I do. She has until recently done more ironing than I do, that seems to be changing actually. She always used to say she was good at ironing... I think she hooovers more and she cleans floors more than I do. She never does anything like cleaning out cupboards or not sort of basic hidden cleaning, she'll never do that, it's all superficial stuff..."

As far as the division of childcare tasks in the daily routine Raymond does take a large share of this when he is at home. He gets the children ready in the morning and baths them at night.

Raymond:

"I almost always get up first and usually give the kids their breakfast, organise the breakfast for the children. Broadly I am in charge of the children whilst I am at home really, and Carole is whilst I'm out. Whilst I am out she is in charge of the running of the house generally and then when I come home I tend to take over. So I mean usually there is a meal ready when I get home but then after the meal I will perhaps play with the children a bit... or listen to music and I usually bath them or get them ready for bed and then I almost always read them a story, because I enjoy that really, and then well... and then in the evenings I quite often do some more housework, like washing up or something."

At the weekend Raymond says that he cooks more than Carole. They have agreed that she should have time for her own projects as she is at home through the week with the little children. Carole does therefore get free time to pursue her own interests and have a break from childcare while Raymond takes over running the house.

Raymond:

"I probably tend to do more cooking at the weekend than she does but then again that is something that I enjoy doing. I enjoy cooking, so it's no hardship. I think we agreed that the weekends were her time for trying to do other things other than looking after the children. That is the time she can settle to something else, dressmaking or painting or whatever she was to do, various things, so that's what tends to happen during the weekends, she tends to do that and then I take over looking after the children during the day and all night and meals and things while she works."

When it comes to deciding who will take which task Raymond is convinced that Carole has rather lower standards than he does so she can put up with greater chaos and mess. This means that Raymond is more likely to clear up.

Raymond:

"In family life there is an amazing amount of work just keeping it going. I don't know why - I mean we tend to leave things until we can't stand them any more and then one of us cracks and does them and I think I probably crack sooner, more often."

Raymond does find it difficult to balance childcare against other household tasks at the weekend. He is aware that with young children in tow some household jobs become impossible.

Raymond:

"I am rather torn at weekends in spare time thinking that I ought to be doing household jobs and repairing things, and I get irritated because they get in the way rather, but on the other hand I suppose I am quite happy to have an excuse not to do it. I think I must give some time to the children so that's an excuse because it can be rather irritating the relentless level of work."

Carole admits that Raymond does undertake a large amount of housework and childcare although the underlying organisation of the house is hers. Carole says that she does not like housework: "Not one of my priorities, no". She often has a project which she works on whenever possible, a painting, a tapestry or some silk screen work. This is set up in the spare room and Carole retreats there whenever possible. She sells art work and works as a reflexologist at home so she is already well established as an employed person. She maintains that she was always aware of Raymond's potential as a 'houseperson'.

Carole:

"We lived in a shared house. That's where I met him. He was the person who would wash up because he couldn't stand the mess - and Hoover the floor when nobody else noticed the bits."

Although Carole is at home with children she has part-time employment and her marriage to Raymond does seem to approximate to the ideal of mutuality and companionship. This is helped because Raymond is very

easy-going and kindly. Finding a liberal, generous husband is one solution to the potential oppression of women's experience in the family. Raymond does not have a demanding career and he therefore has time to spend with the family.

Hazel and Harry

Living near Rose and Chris on Richmond Road, Harry has converted a traditional Victorian terrace into an airy modern home. There are split level rooms, spiral staircases and modern furnishing. All this work, plus his career has left Harry with very little time for childcare and domestic labour. Consequently Harry and Hazel have well defined roles. He wouldn't 'object' to more childcare but it simply does not work out in that way.

Harry:

"We have got very defined roles - the conventional role of me doing the maintenance and Hazel doing the domestic things, and it's very much easier to maintain it in that way. So in a sense looking after Jane fell into that although if the need arose I wouldn't object to these things. But it's simply that it pans out that way. That's the way it works."

Hazel is not so sure that Harry would be prepared to change roles. She knows that the pressure is on her to do all the housework before he comes home.

Hazel:

"He comes home wearily at the end of the day and he starts tiredly putting things away and you can see that it's all dreadful. That I should have done it and there he is poor man after a hard day's work having to... you get the picture."

Harry's philosophy towards child-rearing may also contribute to justifying his absence from childcare tasks. He prefers the children to 'fit in' with

whatever he is doing. "I'm not going to do artificial things just to please them."

Consequently, although Harry will include the children in whatever he is doing a lot of time is spent up ladders and mending things in which young children cannot participate. Unlike Raymond, therefore, Harry has decided to prioritise household repairs and tasks over childcare.

Kate and Gerald

Having moved into a larger house just off the Denton Estate, Kate and Gerald have undertaken a considerable amount of household repairs. As they have four young children the work involved in family life is relentless. Gerald is a teacher and if he has extra work he tends to stay late at school.

Gerald:

"If I'm under pressure with a job deadline I give into them and just stay at work."

He often gets in late and is then involved in the evening routine with the children.

Gerald:

"When I get home it's time with the kids, but it's not always all that much time, if I get home at 6 pm one of us puts them to bed at 7.30 pm, it's not a long time. But I'm quite happy to get on with the kids and probably put them to bed."

Gerald has work to prepare for the following week and the household tasks, which pile up. He finds it a difficult decision to reach a balance so that he can do everything necessary and spend time with the children.

Gerald:

"And at weekends I think the same goes, at this time of the term I've always got plenty of work to do on a weekend. I try to do it on a

Saturday, and do it on Sunday, if I'm working at home on jobs around the house I try to involve the kids as much as possible. Actually that's a nice thing to do because you get them to do the same job as you. I mean the damage they can do with a hammer is pretty minimal really. Then this little bit of time you've got, say on a Saturday, there's always 101 jobs to do around the house, but if you say well, I'm going to do that job, I'm not going to do anything with the kids, then on Sunday there's the marking and then the weekend has gone before you've done much with them."

The problem is that Kate is left with the cooking and shopping which gives her very little chance to recover from the domestic routine.

Gerald:

"So if I give over that time to doing things with the kids and doing one or two jobs in the house, then Kate is doing all the cooking at the weekends, just as she's been doing in the evening, just before I've got in."

Gerald does have school holidays and he is willing to take over a greater share of domestic tasks although he claims to be inexperienced compared with Kate who cooks and cleans all the time.

Gerald:

"But with the holidays with teaching, things do then change. Of course if someone has been cooking for several weeks you just don't automatically jump out of that sort of habit. It takes an effort to change, and the worst routine of the day is not perhaps the actual cooking, it's working out what exactly has to be cooked and that sort of thing."

Although Gerald is prepared to take over more of the work in the house he prefers to do so within Kate's organisation. He does not like to be responsible for planning meals or organising children's outings but will follow Kate's plans. He does have a tiring and demanding job and he has to be at work by 8.30. This all leaves Kate with the bulk of the domestic responsibility. Once again she maintains that she does not prioritise housework. "Not my favourite," she says.

From this case study material some important points emerge. Firstly it was much easier to collect detailed descriptions of daily routines from men who believed that they contributed substantially to childcare and to domestic labour. Amongst the families where men's share of this kind of work was rather low it was difficult to discuss the specifics of which person undertook which task because the women were doing the bulk of the work and there was not very much else to discuss. Sometimes the wives justified this by explaining that their husbands had a very taxing workload.

In all eight households it is the woman at home who undertakes the basic organisational work of the household and the man is 'happy' to 'help' by taking certain chores from her schedule and easing the load by completing those. This changes in every household but his career workload usually remains a priority. Only Raymond prioritises family life as highly as his job, and the quality of Carole's life as highly as his own.

Furthermore these men often described their domestic responsibilities during periods when their workload was comparatively light. Often however the male career commitments increase, and then the wife has to take over completely for long periods. Janet also makes this point - his priorities change, hers cannot.

Janet:

"His priorities shift and he doesn't think 'I should wash up'. He's thinking about his work and that fills up his mind and his time."

This material shows a higher participation in childcare and domestic work than the men interviewed by Steve Edgell and Ann Oakley, but there is clearly an ebb and flow in the male participation in the household. There is greater constancy in women's effort and responsibility. Ellen Derow

suggested something similar when she pointed out how the women in her study were the responsible parent most of the time.

"The extent to which mothers are responsible for being at home with children giving in some sense passive care by being available is greater than for fathers. This is true whether we look at time when children are awake or asleep." (Derow, p.32).

While it is clear that men are involved with bringing up their children there are no simple rules for assessing paternal involvement. This is reflected in the EOC report by Bell, McKee and Priestly, when they suggest in relation to fathers and new babies:

"Non-involvement emerges as a minority position and is culturally weakly held. The concepts of 'sharing' and 'turn taking' were reiterated widely but without a doubt, they were fairly elastic and shifting in meaning." (Bell et al 1983).

The point also emerges from this study. It is clear that the family life of these couples is very hard work. In the past, middle class households might have had a servant. Now the husband is expected to take some part in maintaining a home life which is too much work for one person alone. The standards of housework and childcare are high and the treadmill of domestic work is relentless. The men participate in a number of ways with differing levels of commitment. However the possibility for opting out is a socially sanctioned alternative for men. Malcolm and Harry contribute very little to childcare or housework. The level of effort and negotiation to keep the husbands opting in can create tremendous discord.

Marriage remains an agreement to experience life differently and men and women continue to live very different lives. Equal opportunities initiatives which encourage women to emulate the lifestyle and achievements of men are simply attempting to add women into the ongoing structure. This kind of approach fails to acknowledge that men as well as women may have

competing commitments. The way in which home and work is made compatible is by two partners assuming responsibility for different spheres of life. Because the issue of money and dependency immediately arises, it is women's work which lacks recognition as it is largely unpaid and often invisible.

2) Money

In theory the joint bank account and joint mortgage give credibility to the idea of egalitarianism in marriage. Many men assert their wives' financial equality. 'It's her money just as much as mine' was a frequently made comment from men whose wives were unpaid and confined to home with small children.

Most of the women I talked to seem to accept financial dependency on their husbands as being the lot and the right of a wife. The control of family funds may be a sensitive issue. Money is a source of power and it is possible, although not inevitable, that the balance of power in a marriage may be reflected in control of finance. The financial dependence of being a wife is one of the most significant aspects of womanhood. Some women feel this more than others.

Janet explains that neither she nor Jeffrey is concerned about money.

LH:

"Do you feel impelled to go out and earn money?"

Janet:

"No, never have done."

LH:

"Does that create any kind of imbalance?"

Janet:

"No, not at all."

She says that Jeffrey would work for no pay if he could do what he enjoys.

He pays the bills but she could do it if she wanted to.

Janet:

"Jeffrey is a particular kind of man. If he wasn't paid he'd do exactly as he's doing now. If I wanted to I could assume all the responsibility for money and bills."

Janet maintains that she can spend money if she wants to, but would find it difficult to be in charge of finances as she is not the main wage-earner.

Janet:

"... I'm not interested in clothes. Anyway, I spend if I want to. I don't think much about money. I did get worried about the finances. So he does most of the bill-paying now. I used to do it right at the beginning, when I earned more than him, I used to do all the bill-paying. Then I stopped working. The problem is, if you are bill-paying and not working you don't actually know what you've got in the way of income. When he does extra lectures and so on he knows that he can balance this against his bills whereas I couldn't do that. It's terribly tedious."

Jeffrey appears to have all the financial control with Janet's consent. However her background is one of wealth, and her father contributed heavily to their present house. This undoubtedly gives Janet an advantage over many women who come from families with less financial security.

Her casual attitude is not echoed by Anna. Anna feels that the money belongs to Malcolm and she spends it with his consent. She has to negotiate with him about money, but not really from a position of strength. They do not have a joint account, but she has an account into which her housekeeping allowance is paid.

Anna:

"I always have this thing that if I want to spend some money I've got to sort of get it approved. My car needs a service, I can't pay. He

can, it's his account. I have a housekeeping account which pays for most things. Things like the car come out of the other account. I've actually got to negotiate the things I can't spend out of my own money. I've just got to."

Malcolm takes the view that Anna should be able to pay for her requirements.

Malcolm:

"She has her own account for her expenditure and major household expenditure comes from my account."

As Anna earns no money it is all Malcolm's money. Anna feels that Malcolm's salary is payment for his individual work and she has to bargain with him for some share. The contribution she makes with her domestic work in the creation of his labour power is hidden. She is asking for his money. This point emerged from a study conducted by Meredith Edwards. Many wives saw the husband as having control of family finance.

"Our study contained evidence that many wives perceived their husbands as in control of family finances; these women appeared to have been brought up to accept a subordinate position - at least in financial matters." (Edwards 1981, p.133).

In this community there exists the veneer of financial equality but clearly many women acknowledge his income as his money. In some families the money, or lack of money, leads to arguments and anxieties.

Gerald, unlike some men in the area, does not earn a lot of money. Kate maintains that they do not argue about money, and yet there are difficult decisions about how to spend Gerald's income. Kate says she is more of a 'spendthrift'.

Kate:

"... money isn't really an issue except the Scale 1 teacher's salary - he doesn't exactly earn a fortune so you know there isn't exactly spare money to argue over I suppose. I tend to be more of a spendthrift then partly because I do most of the shopping so I tend to

make most of the decisions. I've just made a new bed cover. That was my decision. I can't stand scruffy old rubbish in the bedroom and because I am working at home I see things and that's always the argument."

Gerald will question Kate about the way money is spent but she maintains that she must buy nice things for the house as it is her working environment.

Kate:

"If we are going to argue over money it's me spending money. Say I get a new mirror or something, and he'll say 'Why did you spend £20 on that?' And I'll say 'I can't stand living in a dump because I actually work there as well because I'm there most of the day'. He doesn't notice because he's in and out and is not terribly bothered."

Although Gerald is less likely to spend money Kate does feel he should try to economise. He wasted £8 on the rabbit.

Kate:

"And then he'll go and spend £8 on chicken-wire to make a rabbit run. £8! He's just decided that the rabbit needs a bigger run and because that was the only day he had time to do it he just went round the corner instead of somewhere that might have it cheaper further away and just spent £8. I went berserk. £8 on a stupid old rabbit."

They are not organised about finance as neither has time to organise the money properly.

Kate:

"So we're not all that organised about money... Yes, I know there are people who work out their accounts efficiently... it works if you have enough time to sit there and keep writing things in columns."

Maria makes minor decisions about spending but Martin is consulted on major expenditure. Again they do not have a great income, so large items must be thoroughly considered.

Maria:

"There isn't enough money for one person to go off and buy something - well - small things - if I go into town and something is on offer and

I think 'that would make a good present for somebody' and I buy it Malcolm says, 'jolly good'. He's quite relieved to leave that sort of thing to me. But we have just started buying camping equipment - we generally do that together, we go and price things together."

This reinforces Steve Edgell's suggestion that minor financial decisions are left to the wife while major decisions are taken jointly or by the husband.

"Decisions concerning money reflected very clearly the tendency to relegate the less important decisions to the wife. Typically, the husband decided the overall allocation of financial resources and had most say in the case of decisions involving large sums of money, whereas the wife in every research family tended to make all the 'minor' decisions." (Edgell 1982, p.56).

In Pauline Hunt's study the husband often had the final say in the decisions about money.

"In each case (in her research families) the wage earner had the final say as to how money would be spent or more often in these inflationary times how money would not be spent" (her emphasis). (Hunt, p.558).

In this study, in all cases where the wife is at home with children she will consult the husband about all expenditure apart from minor domestic or household purchases.

It is difficult for a woman to gain a sense of financial equality when she is at home with small children. The control of finance may continue to be his concern despite a verbal commitment to greater equality. This issue is highlighted when women return to paid work. Hunt, Edwards and Pahl have all drawn attention to the greater financial control of family money exercised by women who are employed.

In Rose's case things have changed over the period of this study. When I first interviewed Rose she always checked with Chris before buying

large items. This conversation took place in 1981 before she returned to teaching.

LH:

"Do you spend money on yourself?"

Rose:

"Yes. If it's something very big that I want, for example I saw a very large antique mirror, the one I've got in the lounge, a little while ago and I knew money was running a bit short. I just rang Chris up and said 'What do you think?' He said, 'Well, if you really want it you just have it', and I went out and got it straight away. I wanted a couple of comfortable dresses, you know loose things I could float about in and feel totally comfortable at home and he said 'Well look, just go (and get them)'. So I just went and got them. It's a very good relationship about money."

There is always a difficulty in separating money for the housewife because housekeeping is considered a general resource for the family. When Rose buys a mirror for the living room she classifies that as spending money on herself.

Rose was also responsible at that time for minor economies, again reinforcing Steve Edgell's point about the wife's responsibilities for minor decision making.

LH:

"Does he spend money on himself?"

Rose:

"He smokes which takes up quite a lot. At lunchtimes until recently he found he was going to the pub for lunches because that's what they do there. So he decided that to save money he would take sandwiches and have his drinks here..."

Except as it turns out it was her anxiety about money (plus her willingness to make his sandwiches) which led to his economies. Finally she admits this.

LH:

"Does he make his own sandwiches?"

Rose:

"No. He never does. You see I think it's an awful waste of money for him to spend £2 a day on macaroni cheese or something in a pub. I'm more aware of it and he might forget things. As I'm making Tristan's anyway I might as well sit down and make Chris's as well."

Chris at that time was aware of the ambivalence that Rose felt about money.

He says that they have a 'reasonable' amount of money and it is just spent.

LH:

"Well what about money, or what about decisions about money?"

Chris:

"We don't make decisions about money, we just spend it actually. We don't have any kind of financial constraints, I suppose that is one of the lucky things about being middle-income - although we are not exactly rich we always seem to have reasonable amounts of money."

Rose did not have a housekeeping allowance. She has always had a cheque book and takes money from the joint account.

Chris:

"We don't have any housekeeping or anything like that. I certainly would never dream of paying Rose an allowance that she has to keep to, we've just got a joint account and the money comes in and we spend it."

He says that they negotiate over large items of expenditure but there is a considerable margin within which they would not consult over money.

Chris:

"I suppose if there's anything fairly major, anything in particular for the house we always do come to a consensus between us before we actually spend it, we don't roar out and buy dishwashers and things. Then again we don't sort of, anything up to £50-£100 then we don't necessarily tell the other one we just go and do it. So we don't have any hassles over money at all. I don't think."

However Chris is aware that Rose has anxieties about spending money which he has earned.

Chris:

"I don't know whether it's built into her from her sort of upbringing or whatever, but she still feels guilty about going out and having her hair done or buying a dress or whatever, if she isn't actually earning a wage. I could tell her till the cows come home that she does earn a wage - she pulls her weight in the house but she still seems to have this inbuilt, slight conscience herself about it."

He found Rose's guilt rather irritating because he spent money on himself and really expected Rose to do the same without any anxieties.

Chris:

"But it irritates me (mildly) when she comes and asks me can she buy a dress, or words to that effect. It's usually 'can we afford for me to buy a dress?'. You know fortunately I think we are getting around that, it began to almost get irritating to me - it did annoy me that she felt she had to come and ask if she could buy a dress or whatever. It could be that I never buy any clothes, I buy sort of stupid things like headphones and records and things like that. We are very good about money because we don't have any arguments at all, none whatsoever."

For these reasons Chris realises that Rose prefers to be teaching and earning her own money. As the study progressed Rose found a full-time Scale 2 teaching post. Although Chris and Rose asserted their good financial relationship in the past Rose herself now feels very differently not just about the money but also about the confidence that having her own income gives her. She agrees with Josephine that earning money can be emotionally liberating.

Rose:

"Yes, oh yes. I feel I'm a different person now. My money makes all the difference. And quite honestly things are organised the way I want them. I've got the confidence now to demand and I do. (Chris) is not just talking to a poor mousey little housewife. I do what I like. I feel freer, definitely."

These later conversations with Rose increased my scepticism about the assertions of equality, which were often made by men about wives at home.

Rose herself had maintained that she felt Chris's equal financially when she was a housewife. However, once she had returned to teaching she found it very liberating. The emotional factors in earning money may only emerge once the period at home has finished. This point is made clearly by Josephine. She went back to work and found it very liberating to earn her own money again.

LH:

"Does the money make much difference?"

Jo:

"Well it did at first. It felt fantastic. It really freed me. It felt good to have some money in my control."

While she was a housewife Jo was dependent on Barry. Once her own money had run out, which she had saved, Josephine had to ask Barry for money and she found that demeaning.

Josephine:

"I hadn't had control of the money since the kids were born or soon after... I kept a little bit of money aside for myself in my bank account, because I really like to feel independent. We've never had a joint bank account so ever since my bit of money ran out I have always had to ask Barry for the housekeeping, and I just felt I'd asked him for a personal amount of money even though it wasn't and I hated doing that."

Once she began to earn some money she found it emotionally very satisfying.

Josephine:

"So as soon as I started working a year ago, it was lovely to get my own money back into my bank account again... it was fantastic because it freed me... I was able to go out and indulge in a dress or two."

However her income is now increasingly absorbed into household expenditure.

Josephine:

"But it's like everything else you get used to the money after a while and the money is getting earmarked more and more. And now it's got to the stage where we are spending my money as soon as it comes in and the pressure is back on again."

Because she is no longer a full-time housewife Josephine can reflect on her past attitude to money. She did not feel that Barry's income was equally hers. Both Anna and Josephine experienced anxiety about spending money on themselves and Pauline Hunt points this out from her study. Women at home do not usually feel like 'co-workers' but family consumers.

"The houseworker's claim to a share of the wage is on the whole made not as a co-worker, but as a member of the family consumption collective." (Hunt 1980, p.561).

The money is seen by Josephine and Anna as belonging to the husband, not as their money but as his money. Their claims on this money are made, not as his partner, but as his wife and dependant. This makes the exchange of money difficult and it is tied into the power relationships within the marriage.

Barry comments on how Josephine's money is now spent.

Barry:

"It's frightening really when you think how much we're earning between us, how it all goes, but the only thing she contributes continuously to the house is the food. She always buys the weekly food."

Barry acknowledges that earning money has made Josephine increasingly independent. She finances house furnishings.

Barry:

"Anything that she earns is hers. I never ask for any of it or I shouldn't have to, but she puts it into the house, in carpets and curtains and finishing the bathroom and things. She spends all the money on finishing the things that she wants doing in the house."

Barry maintains that he is not threatened by Josephine's income and new freedom.

Barry:

"I don't feel at all threatened by it. It's good that she can go out and buy things and she gets into the habit of spending on things and you think well, 'Let's buy it now', and somehow find the money later."

Because Josephine earns a reasonable salary as a teacher and because of the tenuous nature of Barry's work, restoring antiques, her income has become an indispensable part of family finances. He pays the mortgage but she buys the food. Still they do not have money to spare.

Barry:

"My outgoings are so high even when I'm earning quite a bit, it all gets used up in the business and in the outgoings of the home and paying for the extension and things and the mortgage is now quite considerable. We used to have a low mortgage, life used to be terribly simple where we were before. Now we're having to keep running quite fast because we elected to move to a house that I knew would do us for a long time."

Other women on the estate return to work as the family needs their income.

Liz has been working part-time as a librarian since Simon started school. John's income (as a potter) is rather erratic so their financial solvency depends upon Liz's employment.

Liz:

"John has had to take a part-time nursing job because we were out of money. I have to work - no choice but I like it. Sometimes the hours seem long on my late night. But I could never sit at home any more anyway. I really enjoy getting out and meeting people. And it's my money of course and I say how it's spent - well that's obvious really - it's spent on housekeeping but I earn it. That's a good feeling."

These women who are in employment again all discuss how their self-image has changed. Employment gives an identity and a direct relationship with the world which is very different from being a housewife. For many

women the status of 'housewife' meant that the world was somehow mediated through the husband. The return to a direct relationship with money brings confidence and greater power within the marriage. Rose and Josephine who work full-time both feel themselves to be liberated by their incomes. Women who earn less and work part-time still benefit emotionally as well as financially from being in employment.

For other women a return to paid work is not financially so essential, but earning money is always a boost to confidence.

Hazel has returned to part-time work and she reflects on the stresses and compensations.

Hazel:

"Well, it's a rush to get to work (in an antique shop) but I really like meeting people. I feel less like a cabbage. The money isn't much but it's mine. I can buy what I like with it. I don't, but I suppose I could in theory."

Jenny took a job one summer to get out of the house. The children were 'minded' by Anna.

Jenny:

"I did not really take the job for the money but that came as a great surprise. I loved the money. It was all mine."

Issues about financial dependency are central to discussions about equality because the ability to earn money gives a direct relationship with the world and some measure of power within the family.

It was not possible to collect information about finance from all the families in this study. During interviews the subject came up and people often expanded upon it. However some families are very close about their financial arrangements and it was not always possible to ask detailed questions. Nevertheless, there are some general points which can be made.

3) DECISION MAKING/ARGUMENTS

In Chapter One I reviewed some of the literature about the process of decision making in the family. Many writers agreed that power accrues to the husband because of his relationship to the outside world. It is rarely obvious that power is being nakedly employed. Power relations are remade continuously in everyday life.

Small everyday decisions about family life are usually made by the wife. This is suggested by Steve Edgell. The husband's job has priority and this increases the husband's power. This means that important decisions for the family are inevitably husband dominated. Steve Edgell looked directly into the family life of his respondents and came up with data which reinforced these wider points.

"Decisions concerned with moving house, for example, when and where to, were regarded by every couple as extremely important and reported by every couple as husband dominated... Thus in two (money and moving house) of the most 'important' areas of family decision making a picture of husband domination was consistently and emphatically reported. Among decisions that were shared only two areas were perceived as 'very important' - housing and children's education." (Edgell, p.61-63).

My own material also tends to confirm this suggestions. For example Martin allows Maria to make the domestic decisions.

Martin:

"There are some things that Maria definitely takes decisions on - domestic matters like clothes for the children and food, you know, like could they have an apple now, and I refer that sort of thing to Maria because she knows the position on food, you know. Occasionally I might make a decision but generally I refer that one."

Maria is in charge of all the small decisions of life because she is in charge of the minute-to-minute organisation of details. Martin believes that big decisions are made together.

Martin:

"Well we try to make them together. Well we do. I think we must do - the major things."

This process of decision making relies on mutuality and closeness within the family. Martin and Maria spend time talking to each other to keep track of the other person's life.

Martin:

"You can easily get out of tune with each other if you don't spend a few minutes each day - I mean we've found this happens - if you don't spend time talking to each other about the day and about decisions that have been made - that we have made independently. Things can go adrift if you have made independent decisions because you have been pursuing your various roles and I think you need to decide together."

Chris also maintains that he and Rose discuss every major decision together.

Chris:

"I've never really been aware that we take any momentous decisions. I don't think either of us take a decision unilaterally at all but I'm just not aware of us making decisions in that sort of sense."

So if all decisions are discussed is there any way of seeing who has the power inside a relationship? I looked at some of the areas of decision making to see how some of these families came to the decision which prevailed. Steve Edgell in his study of middle class families undertook this project in a systematic way, looking at decisions about jobs and houses and finding that the husband's priorities often prevailed. I have already considered decisions about having children, where women seem to be the decisive partner. In this section I shall look at two important issues which have recently arisen in the lives of many of these families. The first is the question of moving house. The second is the way the decision

is made about the wife returning to work. The way negotiations are carried out may show how power is employed in these families.

It is clear from the table on p. that couples moving into the area usually do so because of his job. For Raymond and Carole a move was inevitable. Their house was small and he wanted to find another job.

Raymond:

"Yes, the house was very small, a little cottage... in a little village which was delightful but it was getting too small so we were going to have to move house anyway. I suppose knowing that that was going to happen made it easier to move location. Carole was quite happy with the move actually, I mean I would have thought she would have been a bit more reluctant but really she didn't mind."

On this occasion the major decision was Raymond's. However Carole is in charge of the less major decisions in their life. She organised which schools the children would attend.

Raymond:

"Actually Carole went round the local schools of her own - on a trip up here I think before we actually moved in and so sort of reported to me what she thought about them and I didn't go to see them myself. I took her description of them and I think I really just endorsed the decision that she came to, so that in that particular case it was probably more her decision than mine although I was quite happy with it. But otherwise I think we do discuss them..."

However when pressed Raymond admitted that the move into the city was his, although he would not have been able to do it without Carole's consent.

Raymond:

"I think that was more my decision than hers. You know we talked about it and if she had said that she didn't want to move, I don't think we would have moved. I wanted to move. I was getting fed up with the job I was doing. I was getting itchy feet and then I liked the job very much indeed and she went along with it."

Moving for a job is a typical decision often precipitated by the male career. Most people on the Denton Estate moved to the area initially because of the husband's job.

The tradition of women following men around is strongly ingrained. Many of the men obtained lecturing jobs at the university and there was no question but that their families would follow.

Helen:

"He got a job here and we all moved. He came first. We stayed in London but the strain was terrific. Then we found this house."

Brigit:

"It was a good move. This is a nice city and I was glad to move away from the north."

Teresa:

"We knew we would have to go where he got work. There was no question."

When it came to moving house within the area the women frequently initiated the decision making process. Rose wanted to move to the Denton Estate.

LH:

"Well, who decided to move; was that a joint decision?"

Chris:

"It was suggested by Rose. We ummed and aahed and talked about it for a while. I wasn't in favour of it at first."

He was not in favour because they had a pleasant house just outside the estate and moving is an expensive, nerve-racking business.

Chris:

"I didn't want to go through the whole thing again, then to fail to move. It's an expensive business moving house, really not to be done lightly. But eventually we decided. I decided that Rose really did want to move and I didn't mind moving too much. I was just sort of scared that the whole thing would either be a waste of time or that we would fail to achieve it again. But it didn't take... Rose didn't have to persuade me for weeks and weeks. I mean in the end we just decided to put the house on the market and see what happened. If it went alright, it went alright. If it didn't we would stay and do something to that house. But she initiated it, certainly."

The impetus and initiative for moving clearly came from Rose, carrying Chris rather reluctantly with her.

Neg moved some years ago from Forsythe Road to Denton Avenue. She also decided on the move.

Neg:

"Auntie Becky died and left me some money, bless her and I said 'It's going into a house'. We tried for one or two in Denton Avenue, then this one came onto the market. I had the money and we bought it."

Kate and Gerald have recently moved just outside the estate onto the London Road. They outgrew their old house.

Kate:

"That house was bursting at the seams. When I got pregnant for the fourth time there was no decision to be made. We had to move."

So the decision to come to the city is often part of a male career move, but moving house within the city is a response to many varied pressures, and the women often engineer it.

Kate explained the move in terms of having a baby, but what about decisions over pregnancy and babies? In the material on motherhood it is clear that women are having babies because they want them. Their husbands seem to agree that the women make the decision about the number and spacing of children, and find this convenient because, having opted out of the decisions about having children, the men can also more easily opt out of the routine mundane household and childcare tasks. These issues are covered in detail in the sections on motherhood and fatherhood on the Denton Estate.

The other aspect of having babies is that women tend to leave paid work at the same time. Very often the women were in jobs they found tedious and were relieved to leave. At the point when this research was

undertaken many women were considering returning to work. I looked at these negotiations within the family.

Maria had returned to part-time work with Martin's support. She was interested in a full-time job which was permanent but decided against it because it would clash with family responsibilities.

Maria:

"There is a full-time job at St Marks. I'd probably get it if I applied. I won't though. Martin's job comes first. I couldn't manage at home if I worked full-time. Life gets impossibly hectic if I'm out too much."

Without even discussing it with Martin, Maria decided against the job.

Rose on the other hand has had Chris's support to return to full-time teaching.

Chris:

"She gets bored if she's at home all the time. She likes working and I'm all for it."

Fortunately Rose is very well organised and hard-working so the household routine is well established. Also they have recently moved house and Rose's income has become an indispensable part of family finance.

Jo could not have returned to teaching with support from Barry.

Jo:

"He had to be willing to take over childcare in the daytime, and he was and he has."

Barry admitted to having been less wholehearted about the decision for Josephine to return to work.

Barry:

"The job came up and everyone said to Jo, 'It's a great chance, you'll get it', so she went for it. When she got it we saw the money as important so I couldn't refuse could I?"

So Barry agreed by default.

Hazel got a part-time job in an antique shop. She did not really discuss this with Harry but committed herself to making sure that this did not affect family life, especially not Harry's life.

Hazel:

"He's out first then I get in about 9.30 to the shop. I'm back just after lunch, so really it doesn't affect him, except for Saturdays once a month. Everything else goes on as before."

Carole retrained as a reflexologist with Raymond's encouragement and support.

Carole:

"I had to go to London for an overnight stay every week. He (Raymond) was great. He just took over with the kids. He's really encouraged me all the way."

For Peggy and Anna strong encouragement to go back to work has made them resist.

Peggy:

"He'd like me to get a job for the interest really. I do get bored at home, but I love the garden."

Now, four years' later, Peggy is still out of employment, unsure how to proceed.

Malcolm also encouraged Anna back to work.

Anna:

"He'd like me to work. I've taken in students - that's nice. I undercharge them, then I think they won't expect too much. Getting a job - he doesn't realise something would have to go - his servicing agency."

Some of the decisions are made by men and some decisions made by women are clearly influenced by male priorities. Are these the kinds of decisions which couples argue about? To find out about this I asked some

of the people in the study about the things in their family which trigger off arguments.

The negotiations over housework and childcare lead to friction and resentment in many households with women attempting to establish periods of their day as their own time because housework and childcare could extend to fill every moment.

Kate:

"The time we argue about is the time he uses to work (for his job) at home. On bad days we argue, on good days we discuss..."

Kate feels any negotiations over housework and childcare have been difficult and acrimonious.

Kate:

"About a year or so ago it got very bad. It got to the point where I didn't feel we were part of his spare time. Now his spare time is discussed - it's better now. By Thursday I'll say 'What are your plans for the weekend?' and we'll try and work it out so he spends a proportion of the time with the children and I have a proportion of the weekend free."

Brigit managed to get Alasdair to share some of the work at home by years of nagging.

Brigit:

"Friends of mine say Alasdair is very good in the house and with the kids. They don't know the years I've spent arguing with him and fighting with him to get to this point. He wasn't like this when the children were babies."

This is probably the way a lot of the housework and childcare are negotiated - by struggle. The men often cannot undertake more work at home because their days are quite full. However this conceals the way that women with young children are even more harassed, especially as they cannot escape for six hours a day.

Raymond admits his potential for argument is less than Carole's.

Raymond:

"I like battling less than she does probably, so perhaps I am more likely to give in and just do it."

He says that he would rather do the work than argue. However Alex has a very strong sense of what he is prepared to undertake. He will not necessarily care for the children even if he is at home. As Jenny explained when she wanted Alex to look after Jack:

Jenny:

"He doesn't like me asking him to take time off. I wanted to take Katy to the book shop once and wanted him to have Jack. He was very put out about it. He said about how I expected him to work and do that as well. It was Anna that had him in the end."

Peggy says that she and Dennis do not argue or quarrel. They have reached an equilibrium whereby each makes the decisions about the things they care about most deeply.

LH:

"What kind of decisions might you fall out about?"

Peggy:

"Oh we don't fall out much at all except like what plant to grow in the garden. They are very small things and then I get my way because I care more about it you see. I choose the furniture because I actually care very much. He is more interested in his work, but we don't quarrel about big things."

I asked Peggy if they ever argued about the children. She says that their major problems are 'emotional'.

LH:

"What about the children?"

Peggy:

"Oh no, we never quarrel about the children. There is nothing to quarrel about really."

LH:

"Do you agree on how you are to bring them up?"

Peggy:

"Yes. Yes, I don't think we have ever quarrelled about the children. We very rarely quarrel and when we do it's because I think he's preoccupied... It's about emotional things rather than practical things."

Again this mention of the husband's preoccupation with work is reminiscent of Evans and Bartolome's study. Peggy and Kate seem to argue with their husbands if they fail to give proper attention to them and to the family.

Anna maintains that Malcolm's job as a solicitor has turned him into a 'professional arguer'.

Anna:

"I mean his job, and his training is to stand up in court and argue. Now he does that three, four, five times you know, I mean all day, Monday, Wednesday, Friday, he is standing up in court arguing. So in a way I have to use totally different tactics because I mean he is a professional! He is a professional arguer!"

Anna says that they do not argue. If she wants a decision to go her way she tries an indirect route to get whatever it is she wants.

Anna:

"Yes, I sometimes wait for him to make a mistake. I sometimes go by default I mean, and if I really am keen on some idea and if we sort of discuss it and it doesn't go my way, I drop it. And then I bring it up again. Why don't we ever come to a decision, because the reason we don't ever come to a decision is that I'm thinking one thing and he's thinking another! I want him to do what I want, you know, so that's it and I drop it and I try again later, you see so that something else will come up."

Obviously the subject of arguments is a difficult and emotive area even in an interview situation. People do not necessarily want to own up to arguing or really explain what arguments are about. In retrospect it is

clear that the level of argument is not necessarily an indication of a happy marriage. Couples who apparently did not argue split up and divorced perhaps because strains built up without any prospect of change in the established patterns.

Also some of the deeper issues which may produce arguments and quarrels cannot necessarily be discussed in an interview. I know from other sources that Alex and Jenny argued about the fourth pregnancy and he wanted her to have an abortion. However neither mentioned that to me.

The areas of power relations, decision making and argument are very difficult to unearth through interview and even through participant observation. However it does appear that the most important decisions are made around the husband's priorities, or perhaps over the priority of securing a good income which depends on the husband. Lesser decisions are made by the wife although they may be very important within the family such as which house, and how many children. People argue rather less about major issues but arguments may hinge on any aspect of life. In this area issues about husband's contribution to housework and childcare may engender dispute in some families.

4) Expert Advice

The major preoccupations of family life among the more traditional research families on the Denton Estate concern pregnancy, birth and child-rearing in all its stages. The apparent uniformity of the organisation of these experiences indicates the cultural similarity of the residents of this community. The kind of expert advice which is acceptable for different life events varies considerably. Medical intervention in child health is more acceptable than medical intervention during pregnancy.

Natural childbirth is preferred and many of the women attended the Natural Childbirth Trust classes. There were no epidurals and few Caesarians among the women I talked to.

Recently Kate and Jenny have struggled against male obstetricians to have home deliveries. For both women it was a fourth baby.

Kate:

"He said that I'd have to have it in hospital. I thought 'not on your life'."

Jenny:

"I wanted to have a home delivery. Sister Serena backed me and I won. But the consultant was really rude about it."

Sister Serena is the midwife who visits pregnant women in the area and presides over home deliveries. Her large and reassuring presence encourages many women to press for home deliveries, certain that Sister Serena will see them through.

Fathers were present at all the births with the exception of the twins born to Janet. They were born by Caesarian section. Nearly all the babies were breastfed for some period and most were breastfed for about six months. Mothers who failed the six month minimum felt guilty. Janet's twins were bottle fed. She asserted -

Janet:

"I couldn't have organised it any other way."

Teresa only managed three months of breastfeeding.

Teresa:

"It's best but I didn't have any milk. I was too exhausted."

Barbara finished feeding Sian at a month.

Barbara:

"I was nervous about how much milk she was getting. Silly really. I've managed with all the others."

Jenny fed Katie for four months.

Jenny:

"I wanted to do a part-time morning job. Alex gave her a bottle. After a while she wouldn't breastfeed so she went onto the bottle completely. I've breastfed all the others for six months."

Health visitors came round after the births but they vary according to the doctor's surgery. As there are three surgeries just outside the Denton Estate with whom it is possible to register the influence of health visitors is harder to ascertain than the influence of Sister Serena. The major support seems to come from grandparents and other mothers in the area who give advice about baby ailments. Close neighbours such as Jenny, Rose and Anna are more valuable as a support system than the spasmodic visits of the health visitor.

In most homes there is a copy of at least one baby care manual, although the amount these works are consulted varies from home to home and with the number of children. Third and fourth children are brought up from parental experience rather than written expertise. However, for first children Hugh Jolly and less frequently Benjamin Spock are both consulted. When most of these families were having babies during the fieldwork stage of this study, Miriam Stoppard was not published. Some of the newer families are certainly reading and relying on her.

The idea of consulting baby care manuals is well established but this does not replace a secure relationship with a doctor. Doctors continue to be extremely popular and children continue to be regularly treated with antibiotics. Even those people who would not go to the doctor themselves

with any regularity will take children to the doctor for minor ailments like colds which usually go away on their own.

For example Rose was irritated when Tristan had stomach ache.

Rose:

"He's had it on and off now for a week. I said 'I'll take you to the doctor and he can sort it out'."

This faith in the medical profession is echoed by Brenda.

Brenda:

"They're the experts. I'd rather hear what they've got to say than go by guesswork."

What they have got to say usually involves a course of antibiotics.

Barbara:

"I took her into the surgery and he gave her a course just in case she got the earache again or had it coming on - as a precaution."

Although the movement towards wholistic medicine is popular on the estate, families rarely take any chances with their children.

Naturally most of these children have the full-time care of their mothers until they are at least five years old; I have discussed the issues about staying at home and maternal guilt earlier.

Some of the women on the estate are married to the experts - psychologists, educationalists and scientists working in the university. However this seems to lead to less marital disharmony than might be expected. Apart from Max and Brenda, where his claims to expertise on childcare created problems, women are generally left to organise the house life.

While the children are at home their education and stimulation are considered very carefully. Galt toys and educational toys and puzzles in

general are very much in evidence, although Cindy and Action Man are certainly popular with the older children.

When it comes to education these middle class parents are all experts. Most have been through higher education and standards are high. For the infant school child, encouragement to read starts early and many mothers said that they read out everything visible to encourage the children. Every house has a large selection of children's books and children who do not read easily are the terror of their parents.

Barry:

"Tom doesn't find reading easy. We worry about him. Josephine wants to spend more time with him - she hasn't got the time at the moment."

Josephine is herself an expert in Barry's eyes as she is a primary teacher.

Jenny also has a reluctant reader of six.

Jenny:

"She doesn't see why she should read when we read to her. Well that's all very well but I try all sorts of tricks to get her going. Nothing has worked yet!"

Life with a slow reader is difficult for parents to accept. Children are encouraged by their parents to get fluency in reading.

Max:

"At nine she could hardly read. I got her reading by helping her every night."

Jeffrey:

"She works with flash cards in the evening. She's really come on."

Because these families all know what their children should be doing at various ages there is very little room for failure. Teachers are expected to extend the child fully and push them on to 'fulfil their potential'. Education is the area where the effect of expert advice combines with

parental ambition. If children are not achieving at school, many parents complain.

The local infants school has found the right balance, in these parents' eyes, combining a liberal approach with a reputation for a relentless attitude to reading and maths. The junior school fails to meet parental standards because the teaching is often dull, discipline is traditional and vibrancy lacking.

As the children grow older, most fall in with parental demands for 'O' level and 'A' level success. Few of the children from the estate are referred to the educational psychologist. Elena's eldest son was referred while she was living with Karen. However after years of therapy he discharged himself at 16. One family on Denton Avenue had two adopted children. When the daughter became a punk at the age of 15 she was put into care by the parents. This shocked the whole estate as her 'crime' did not seem to deserve such extreme treatment.

It is apparent that life is deeply affected by the developments in psychology and other related forms of knowledge. Normality is strongly influenced by the writing of experts in the fields of medicine, childcare and child development. There is little need for social agencies to police the community because the knowledge and expertise which is prescribed has become the cultural psychology of the middle classes. Interestingly a social services building lies on the outskirts of the estate but the social workers are radiating out into the city and the council estates beyond Denton Avenue.

5) Sexuality

Heterosexuality is the cornerstone of family life on the Denton Estate. The people who maintain same-sex relationships are not included in life in the community. They remain outside the support system and outside the social events.

A lesbian relationship of two women living on the estate has recently broken up. Talking to one of the women, Karen, it was clear that social pressure was a factor:

Karen:

"Elena and I split up last year. She found it too much. Her children got teased at school but it was her really. She wanted something solid, reliable. I've heard she's getting married. That makes me feel terrible. She'll always be that person for me."

Elena did get married. I tried to talk to some of the women in the community about sex. It was not always appropriate or possible because sexuality is a difficult subject. I did not discuss sexuality with any of the men in this community. That does not mean that I do not know anything about their sexuality. It does mean that such discussions were impossible without me feeling extremely uncomfortable. Sex is inevitably present in any discussion of sexuality. This means that my informants are all women, often friends of mine, who have exchanged information with me about their sexual relationships. For that reason I have made some contributions anonymous as the information was often exchanged in situations of friendship. Although all my informants have pseudonyms it would still be possible for people within the community to recognise them. For that reason I have not put names next to most of the comments.

When I first knew these women, discussions about sex were never on the agenda for any of us. We were all new mothers and family life had its own

protective shield around us. However as most of these women are now in their mid-thirties, life is experienced rather differently and one or two of the women have felt impelled to question and search for another identity. However the majority have not. They remain locked in the secrecy of the family, and loyalty to husband and the need to maintain the appearance of family solidarity is valued above a search for any individual identity.

During the formal interviews, issues about sexuality rarely arose when talking to women. However during informal conversations, and with greater knowledge of the community, some issues about sexuality were discussed.

From talking to people who later divorced it appears that many 'happily married' couples have almost no sexual relationship. This however is only revealed when the marriage breaks up.

More readily revealed, however, are a whole range of issues about sexual boredom and the problems of being attracted to other people. For one woman at least the virtue of monogamy overcame sexual attraction.

"Last year... I was very much attracted to somebody else and knew it and knew that I was going to have to actually sort it out in my head and in my mind and in my feelings. I knew there was a basic principle from which I was working, which was that I was going to do nothing that would disrupt the relationship that I had already going."

However this problem was not permanently sorted out as a year later she initiated a conversation about sexual boredom in the queue at the greengrocers.

"How do other couples in your study cope with monogamy? It's so boring after all these years. We were talking about this at a dinner party last week. One woman admitted looking for a lover. Somebody else had bought a boat as a sex substitute!"

It is part of the commonsense knowledge about marriage that in order to survive, marriages need to be worked at, and many of these women give instances where they have had to really make an effort to keep the marriage contract which includes child-rearing, housework and monogamy. 'Forsaking all others' may not be easy.

Kate's relationship with her husband went into a decline after one of their children was in hospital for two years. She worked hard to re-establish things between them. To this endeavour sexuality was central.

Kate:

"A friend said recently, 'I mustn't arrange anything for Fridays because that's when you have it off with your husband'. Well, yes. That's the ultimate answer to rescue one's marriage (sex)."

Women seemed prepared to comment about sex if it showed that they did have a sexual relationship but it was 'routine'.

- "It's just routine - it's rather a routine thing."
- "I suppose I'd like to have a love affair just to wake him up a bit - to take a bit of notice of me. Sometimes I think I'll take a lover but I never get round to it (laugh)."
- "The lovers bit - I don't know about that but we are still friends."
- "Sex - well it's part of the job isn't it? Wife I mean. I do it and don't think too much about it."

Certainly none of these statements give any indication that these women are enjoying sex. On the contrary it is accepted as part of the job. However most of the married women in my research group did not discuss sex with me, so I cannot with any conviction draw attention to issues about married sexual relationships.

The women who did discuss sex quite voluntarily were the women from the initial group of single mothers and later the women who divorced or

split up from their husbands during or after the research. These accounts may point to considerable turbulence hidden beneath a facade of family life. Of course people whose marriages break up may not be typical of those which do not.

One woman who recently left her husband maintains that he was 'undersexed'. He also liked trying on her underwear.

"One day I came home and he was trying on my underwear."

Naturally this gave her rather a shock but as it turned out that their sexual relationship had finished some time before this.

"He's undersexed. We had not had any sex for over a year. He didn't want it. We got married early and I've never had sex with another man - only him. I don't know what orgasm means, I've never had one."

She left him and moved in with a friend but a month later she went back. She explained that everything was sorted out, implying that the problems were about the division of labour.

"Oh everything's fine now. He's pulling his weight in the house. I can't complain at all. He's really trying."

Clearly the problems over sex are unlikely to have been sorted out, but the comfort and security of her own home is presently more important than having a sex life.

Another woman whose marriage did break up explained the break-up in terms of sex.

"I met -- (another man) at work and I decided to have an affair because we were really attracted to one another. With -- (her husband) sex was so tedious. You know we didn't bother for about six months and when we did it, it was over in a flash. Having your chips with no vinegar you might say."

Another single parent mother in the study had felt even before marriage that something was wrong but she felt she had no choice but to marry.

"Even before we got married it started to go wrong. I should have seen it coming but I felt I had no choice. I could either go ahead and get married or go home and live with my mother."

After her last child she did not want to resume a sexual relationship with her husband at that time. She mentioned this to the doctor who diagnosed this as pathological.

"I didn't want to have sex at all. I went to the doctor and he said 'How long have you been depressed?' Then I got referred to a psychiatrist... My main symptom was that I didn't want to have sex with my husband!"

This made her anxious about including any details about her emotional state when she tried to discuss medical problems.

"When I'd go to the doctor he'd say 'Is everything alright at home?' I'd just say 'yes'. What else could I say? I didn't know what was the matter with me but I felt desperate."

This was resolved when she left him and this was later explained in terms of sexual problems.

"I didn't want to have sex with him any more. I tried to make him understand that that phase of our lives was over. We'd been close. But sex was dreadful for me. Really dreadful. It was making me ill. I only felt safe when he went away and I could sleep alone."

Another of the single parents also explained the break-up of her marriage in terms of feeling sexually oppressed. Like the case above the problems apparently arose after the birth of the last child.

"I was sick and I didn't want sex at all. Afterwards a doctor said sex was alright after two weeks. I still felt ill and I was terrified

of getting pregnant again. I could easily have left it for six months. When we did it after two weeks I just hated it. I really felt like nothing. I lay on my back and I just cried. I couldn't believe that he could treat me like that. He didn't say anything."

She used to put off sexual encounters.

"I used to put it off. I slept on the edge of the bed. Hanging on the edge. But eventually I had to get it over with. The trouble is... it could go on like that for the rest of your life."

In her case it did not. She left him and took three children with her. I asked her if looking back three years later it was the sexual relationship that split them.

"No. No it wasn't. It was all the battles over housework, over whether I could go to work. Yes and moving around for his job. I didn't see why his job was so important. I had to uproot the children every two years. I could have put up with the sex if everything else had been alright."

All these single parent mothers are still alone some years after the divorce and sexual desire has not propelled them into re-marriage. However one single mother admitted:

"Looking round at other people's relationships there's not much to envy. But I would like somebody to share with. Take the load a bit."

This is an admission that relationships can be mundane and yet the desire to find a sharing relationship lingers on despite the evidence of its rarity.

Many of the married women in this study have maintained the reproductive emphasis on sexuality by having babies every five years. This continues their dependence upon the husband. There is some evidence that other women cope with tedious sexual relationships by thinking of it as part of the job.

The language of love and romance which culminates in marriage masks the imbalance between love and marriage. Being in love, according to our romantic mythology is a highly desirable state. Sex is still understood in the context of romantic love and married sex is an extension of the romantic attachment.

However there seems to be a disjunction between the vision and the reality. Marriage means that women give their domestic, emotional and sexual services in exchange for financial support. Married sex and financial dependency seem to have a strong relationship and dependency implied, not power but powerlessness.

In this study the tedium and even unhappiness which some of these women suffer because of the constraints of sexual relationships with husbands, is seen as almost ordinary, expected. The isolation of dependent women prevents us from recognising that personal problems are political and structural. The dependency apparently chosen by women means that loyalty to the husband is understood as an essential ethic.

6) Law - Divorce

I shall look closely at five divorces to see some of the recurring features. Two of these divorces are couples who have been closely interviewed as reflecting happily married life. The conflicts which emerge during the divorce were not spoken of during the interviews. And yet clearly these seeds of discontent were already present but not brought out into the open - not even as a complaint against the husband. Undoubtedly grievances emerge at times of divorce which have been simmering beneath the surface but are only allowed to fully emerge when all parties acknowledge

the end of the marriage. Then past discontents become powerful in the present.

Case studies

a) Neil and Tess

Neil and Tess were married for ten years. They had met at university and had moved to this town for his job when he gained a lectureship in engineering. Neil's own parents had been divorced and he had lived with his mother and his brother since he was seven. Tess' parents had stayed together through a long unhappy marriage.

Once they had moved Tess had three children, each two years apart and then was sterilised. They bought a large house on the Denton Estate which was re-done in stonework and quarry tiles. They had chickens, vegetables and bees and generally lived a life which reflected their membership of Friends of the Earth, Greenpeace and CND. They apparently had a lot in common, both enjoying gardening and whole-food cookery.

However Tess was obviously under stress after the birth of Alice, her youngest child. She was depressed and ill and seemed unable to recover. Neil's job took him away from home on field trips with students for long periods during which time Tess would often sink into deep depression. In response to this Neil cut down on his periods away from home and tried to be generally more supportive. This rebounded because Tess felt irritated at how wonderful Neil could be. In an interview after her divorce she explained:

Tess:

"Oh he's wonderful alright. He can cook and clean and he's full of energy. But he hasn't borne three children. I have and I'm worn out. I could be wonderful if I'd spent the last ten years like he has being utterly selfish."

In retrospect Tess said she could have gone on if it wasn't for the sexual pressures.

Tess:

"I couldn't have sex with him. I didn't want to, but the tension was unbearable. And then he would go to pieces and start crying. It was like a pressure cooker."

Neil did not really understand what was happening.

Neil:

"I gave way on everything but nothing was enough."

Now Tess lives in a small house about half a mile from Neil. He kept the family home by buying her out. His family are wealthy. This is a source of constant anxiety for Tess.

Tess:

"Why should he have it? (the house). The children can go there and relax and feel at home. It's pokey round here."

Neil sees the children overnight every week and pays substantial maintenance.

Neil:

"I suggested that I put up the payments to £250 per month, because I knew she was really struggling and that way I'd be sure to keep up my weekly contact with the children."

Tess has returned to full-time work as a science teacher. She has never had any maintenance for herself and was impelled back to employment from financial necessity. The divorce was relatively amicable although Tess is bitter about the division of capital and possessions.

Tess:

"He has it easy. He has the income, the house. He doesn't know what it's like to struggle."

She is constantly tired from the anxiety of a full-time job, three children and too much work. He has taken up marathon running and has relationships with younger women research students in his department, although none of these seem to have any permanence.

From Tess's life as a married woman it was difficult to discern the source of her discontents. She merely seemed frequently depressed. However, the break-up brought all the conflicts into the open. Tess resented Neil's job and the way it had exploited her energy. She felt their sex life to be a pressure upon her and it broke her down. Having sex with Neil when she was so angry with him was beyond what she could bear. She is angry with him because he is unbowed by childcare responsibilities although she, herself is unwilling to relinquish these responsibilities for fear of losing the children's love or somehow failing as a mother.

She is now concerned to develop her own career and is working full-time as a science teacher in a secondary school. However, she experiences her life as 'a struggle' and is constantly tired and ill. She remains intensely angry with Neil, and the sight of him, even after three years, can make her hysterical.

Neil has thrown himself increasingly into his career but tries to make himself available whenever the possibility of taking over the childcare arises.

In this case it seems clear that Tess is trapped in a desire for a traditional relationship with her children - a full-time mother at home, and the desire to be working in the world and earning her living. This conflict is literally wearing her out. By any standards Neil's life is nowhere near so tiring or demanding.

b) Sandra and Paul

Sandra came from London from parents who had endured a long and unhappy marriage. Paul's parents had been reasonably happy but quite hard up. Sandra and Paul were married for ten years, living first in London and then in a number of places as Paul had sought promotion. He was a teacher who had risen from a scale 1 to a deputy headship in five years. Sandra said she spent her time making a home in unfamiliar places; as soon as they became familiar it was time to move on.

Sandra and Paul had three children in six years and after the third child Sandra decided to retrain and go back into teaching. By this time they lived on the Denton Estate in a rather rundown house which they partially repaired and redecorated.

Paul by this time was a deputy headteacher in one of the large comprehensive schools and his work was very demanding. He was out from eight in the morning until six-thirty at night and hardly available for a minimum of childcare or support.

Sandra felt that the breakdown of her marriage came with her desire to return to work.

Sandra:

"I went and did a course at the university and then I wanted to get a job. So I began to demand more of Paul. More real commitment to childcare, more housework, and he couldn't take it."

Paul:

"I knew she was angry with me for all the moves but I felt that I'd paid. I tried. But it wasn't enough. She wanted something more. She wanted me to suffer."

Sandra kept the house and Paul moved out after she had taken the children to Women's Aid because he assaulted her. After a year on the dole Sandra got a job and started to survive. Before that it had been touch and go.

Sandra:

"I was depressed and ill. Very depressed and very ill. Somehow I've struggled back up."

Paul remarried and lectures at the university. He paid £200 a month maintenance for the children and sees them every other weekend. Sandra earns £8,000 a year. She is financially not as well off as Paul and has to witness his affluence.

Sandra:

"Lucky for Paul I have a full-time job but it was a fluke getting that. I find it absolutely exhausting running a home, three kids and a full-time job. His life is so easy by comparison. More money would help. I could pay a cleaner and have more childcare but I know Paul would not pay. So I watch him and Gaynor in their new cars and hear about their video and their foreign holidays. If anyone has come out of this divorce better off financially it isn't me because I've got all the work, all the responsibility and very little money."

Paul was adamant that he would not pay maintenance to Sandra.

Paul:

"It is the one thing I absolutely refuse to do. I will not be responsible for her. I'll pay for my kids."

Sandra has only really lived on the Denton Estate as a single parent. Clearly however, she had decided on some independent life for herself through employment and the strain on the marriage was too much. Paul was very careerist. His family had always fallen in with his plans and he was successful. However, this lifestyle decidedly needs the benefit of a full-time housewife at home to prop up the man at work. Paul had very little time to be involved with his children or domestic chores. He could not maintain any veneer of equality in the circumstances.

Sandra had never quite believed what she got herself into. She managed the housewife role reasonably well for five years but then she

found life 'unbearable'. She wanted employment and more to life than childcare and cooking. Now, of course, she has a life of childcare, cooking and employment which is tiring and stressful.

c) Brenda and Max

They had met in London where she was a social worker and he was employed as a psychologist in the probation service. After living together for a year, Max decided his career would benefit and he got a job in Sheffield, not consulting Brenda. Brenda decided to move too but she was bitterly unhappy, blaming Max for ripping her from her life and friends in London. Finally they moved back to London and then Max got a job in this town. At this time Brenda was pregnant so she felt she had no choice but to move with Max. They got married and bought a house. Once the baby was six months old Brenda returned to work in the probation service. After another six months Brenda decided to leave Max, and moved into the house of a woman friend. They went through a long period of communication only through solicitors. She wanted him to see their daughter for one weekend a month. He was distraught.

Max:

"It was unbearable. She had some fantasy about me trying to take Ellie away from her. I hated her so much during that period."

Brenda, herself a social worker, called on the services of another social worker to help to organise the access arrangements.

Max:

"He came round and tried to explain to me how frightened Brenda was that I might somehow get Ellie away from her. He accused me of being too much like a mother. It was absolutely outrageous. She expected me to raise my mortgage by £12,000 and pay her £86 per month to see Ellie for one weekend a month and the occasional afternoon."

Eventually access was settled at two weekends a month and tea every Wednesday. Brenda settled for the lump sum and no personal maintenance.

Max went along to two seminars at the university on fatherhood research and even took down the address of 'Families need Fathers' but he did not use the contact as his continuing maintenance payments were obviously contingent upon more frequent access. This appears to be the equation. The relative financial affluence of the father secures regular access to the children and eventually the trade-off between money and access becomes established into a more or less amicable arrangement.

The conflicts in this marriage are rather less obvious than the previous two. Brenda knew already that Max considered his job more important than his relationship with her. She still got pregnant and got married. Max suggests that this was because she wanted to have the baby and she could not bear to spend any time out of a relationship. As she did not have anybody else she clung to him. Brenda partially admits this.

Brenda:

"I was stupid. We were so badly mismatched and yet I clung to some romantic idea."

This 'romantic idea' caused Brenda a number of years of heartbreak, both from pursuing the fantasy and then from realising that she could not live within it.

Jo and Barry

Since this study began Josephine and Barry have split up. They had been married for eight years, having met and married in this town. They lived in a large beautiful house on Denton Avenue into which they poured money and effort. They had two children and Jo worked full-time as a

teacher. Barry worked as an antique restorer. Josephine had an affair with her head of department at school and this turned into a serious relationship. She left Barry to live with Mike (her new partner) and the children stayed with Barry. This period lasted for six months.

Finally Mike got a job in another town and Josephine went with him. She convinced Barry he should give her back the children and threatened endless legal wranglings if he did not agree.

Jo:

"We'd drifted apart really and for years our sex life has been monotonous. When I met Mike I felt so alive."

She has now had her third baby with Mike. Barry is upset and blames Jo, especially after the baby.

Barry:

"I'd tried to do everything she'd wanted. I hate them both. I wrote him a letter really giving it to him. Now I'm on my own I've got nothing. I'm a loser and he's living with my children!"

The bitterness over the children comes partly from the knowledge that he could have put up a fight about the children. He decided not to do so because initially he believed that they would be better off with their mother. Now he regrets the haste with which he made the decision.

The conflicts within the marriage were clear from the interviews. Josephine was strained and overworked. She not only supervised all the housework and cooking but she did all the shopping. She also had the full-time job. Barry would have done the shopping but Jo could not give up that bit of control.

On the other hand Barry's life at this period was calm and relaxed. He enjoyed the company of his youngest child Sam in the afternoons after nursery and then he went back to work in the workshop in the evening. The

division of labour was not equable and Josephine and Barry saw each other very rarely in passing. Josephine's relationship with Mike is intense and fulfilling in some way that she does not believe her life with Barry could ever be.

e) Janet and Jeffrey

They had been married for fifteen years and had one adopted child, Denise, and the twins. Their house was large and beautiful, decorated by Janet herself, who did all the house maintenance and the gardening.

Janet was a housewife for ten years or more. She disliked the idea of returning to work and liked pottery and painting which she could do at home.

Life worked while Jeffrey had a job at the university in this town. However, he took a job at another university, an hour and a half's drive away. Once the travelling became too difficult, Jeffrey took a room at his new university and came home at the weekends. His new job was interesting and demanding, and home life at the weekend was 'a change'.

Meanwhile Janet had started to childmind for a single parent father whose wife had died. The relationship developed from a friendship and Janet felt it was more important to her than her marriage. She decided to leave Jeffrey and buy a house with her new partner, taking the children with her.

Jeffrey, who had clearly prioritised his career over his marriage, was sad but not totally surprised.

Jeffrey:

"I've been away a lot. Janet was on her own. She was being a good samaritan for this chap whose wife has died, and then she says she's in love with him. Of course I'm upset."

Janet is transformed from a dull bored depressed character to a vibrant person whose making plans about moving and finding a job.

Janet:

"I feel I've come alive."

Both partners understand that this marriage broke down because Jeffrey was never there.

Janet:

"He sees the children now about as much as he did when we were married, because honestly he was never there. You can't go on being married to somebody who is never there."

Clearly Janet missed the element of support and friendship and sought it from another relationship. In retrospect it is clear to see that she had been depressed for a number of years and so much of her personality was submerged in being 'Jeffrey's wife'.

In all these case studies of divorce some common elements emerge. Firstly, conflicts are suppressed in order to maintain the veneer of happy marriage. Some event usually triggers the divorce, often related to the husband's career. If it is not an event, it is a growing awareness by the wife that she is being exploited by the husband in pursuit of his career, until she cannot cope with the overwhelming evidence of his careerism. Also Josephine and Janet had lost any feeling of intense emotional involvement with their husbands, and sought relationships which resuscitated this feeling.

Obviously there are a complex of interwoven events which trigger a divorce but at the moment when divorce is imminent the marriage is suddenly transformed from a supportive idyll to a focus for conflict and confusion.

These conflicts have always been there but the state of being married is one in which conflicts must be somewhat repressed.

Summary

Once the break has taken place and the marriage is over, there are some common features in all the post-divorce arrangements. All the men make financial commitments which they can afford to keep and seem to be willing to keep. In return all the men maintain or develop close relationships with their children. They all have houses and the usual childhood necessities. As it happens, all these men are university lecturers, so they have time to spend with their children and can adjust their timetables to fit in with childcare demands.

These demands, however, are not heavy. The ex-wife continues to do most of the work of child-rearing and therefore bears most of the responsibility for childcare arrangements. Most of these women work full-time, which eases the ex-husband's financial burden. Many of the women are bitter. They took time off from work for childcare while the husband pursued his career. When they returned to work they not only have to juggle childcare but they return to low-paid employment. There is little financial acknowledgement of the women's investment in male lives, and the women emerge from marriage poorer in every way. They have to pay for childcare, they cannot earn high incomes, and they lead an exhausting life of paid employment and childcare. The husbands benefit from their labour as mothers, and their lives are usually less tiring.

The recent changes in the divorce laws which assume equality between men and women fail to take into account the continuing inequality between the sexes. Women continue to take most domestic responsibility, and during

marriage or after divorce the workload and financial situation of women and men are very different. Single parent mothers around the Denton Estate are often ill and exhausted. Divorced fathers still take foreign holidays and eat in restaurants. Equality does not seem to emerge from divorce.

CONCLUSION

Previous sections were concerned with an investigation of motherhood and fatherhood on the Denton Estate. They were found to involve very different kinds of responsibility, different amounts of work and time commitments. In this section on 'Special Topics' I investigated some important aspects of family life which had also been raised by other writers either seeking evidence for greater equality between the sexes or confirming the impossibility of equality within the family.

As far as the allocation of time and tasks is concerned it is clear that men are undertaking a greater amount of housework and childcare than they feel that their fathers did. Domestic work is sandwiched into the day for some men. If this is to be seen as a move towards equality in some families, it is offset by the limited participation of other men who are able to slip back into traditional roles. It is also possible for men to assert an interest and commitment to a domestic equality which it then transpires they cannot fulfill because of career commitments.

In any case the apparent increase in domesticity among men must be viewed in the context of marriage which contains few other egalitarian elements. For example financially, while women are economically dependent on men there is inevitably a power imbalance within the relationship. Women who have escaped into financial independence express the tension economic dependency produces. Women who are still at home with children

say it is equitable. It would be difficult in the circumstances to say anything else.

There is some evidence that the major decisions reflect the husband's career demands. Minor decisions are left to the wife so that her time and mental capacity are taken up with the incessant trivia of life, which he often manages to escape. It is not really clear what was the status of the material gathered about arguments. Obviously this is an area of family life where it is difficult to gather sufficient material. Some couples admit to arguing over domestic arrangements. Others do not, and yet arguments may indicate there is the possibility of a solution in which the husband does take a share of domestic work. The couples who divorced just before or after this study did not report arguments or disagreements.

The section on the relationship between the experts and the community shows more than anything else how the middle classes are able to reflect and absorb the ever-changing yet curiously static visions of normality promoted by expertise, usually psychology or medicine. This is because the middle class effectively police themselves as far as the requirements of health and welfare are concerned. They are the normality against which all other sections of society are measured. The available expertise is followed without pressure from social agencies who deal with the working class. However the tyranny is internal and possibly emerges as guilt and anxiety amongst mothers, as women are responsible for maintaining middle class standards.

Again the status of the material on sexuality was not clear, as I did not make this a focus of the interviews and therefore perhaps only registered the words of women who were bored or depressed by sex. However it is clear that a breakdown in sexual relations can be an important aspect of the breakdown in marriage.

The section on the law discussed some of the reasons behind the divorces which took place on the Denton Estate and the conflicts which surfaced when divorce became a possibility.

This section reinforces some of the suggestions of the writers discussed in Chapter Two. Most suggest that there are few indicators of increasing equality in marriage. This section discusses how the lives of men and women are not converging into some androgynous state, but remain very different according to gender.

CHAPTER 9

LEARNING FROM PARENTS

In this chapter I shall focus on some of the ways in which women and men draw on their parents as sources of identity and justification for their current parental roles. In doing this I shall elaborate on two of the themes which have emerged so far:

- a. conflicts in and justification for certain kinds of parental role, and
- b. the processes whereby traditional family life may be reproduced.

I shall consider the discussion of the lives of mothers and commitments to domesticity, and the commitments to employment in father's lives. In looking at this background material I shall use information from five men and five women interviewed in depth. This will reflect upon the ways in which parental relationships are internalised or reproduced. In some cases parents' lives are woven into a justification for current lifestyles often as some kind of moral lesson from the story-teller. In each case I try to ascertain the significance of the stories told about parents and how they contribute to the ideology of the present family.

Questions about the nature and effects of the knowledge of parental relationships point to the importance of extending the theoretical framework of Chapter 3 to describe how ideological commitment to certain kinds of relationship can encourage individuals into one understanding of their history as opposed to another.

Case Studies

The women

a) Rose: the lessons of poverty

Rose came from a working class background where her parents were quite poor. Her mother had worked sporadically but the main breadwinner was her father. He had died when Rose was 17 and her mother had then supported two children mainly on her widow's pension and other undeclared work.

Rose is in her early thirties and she has two children herself. Her mother is still alive but very deaf, working as a telephone cleaner. Rose passed the scholarship, gained her 'A' levels and then went on to teacher training college. She married while at college and worked as a reception class teacher before her first child was born. She then had six years at home with two children. After a number of miscarriages she gave up the idea of a third child and returned first to supply work and then to a full-time post when her youngest child was two and a half.

At home with her parents she had observed a very traditional division of labour.

"In my family it was definitely a father that went out to work, brought the bread money and did nothing else; absolutely nothing. I cannot remember him doing anything in the house. Now let me think, I might be being unfair. No."

Her last comment was made in an ironic tone of voice. Her mother did all the work in the house. Rose suggests she was prepared to do it.

"My mother, there again was the type of woman - she had great pride in keeping the house looking nice, clean and tidy and having nice things around her and she did, I think, probably quite enjoy doing the housework."

Not only did Rose's dad not participate in the housework but Rose herself did not do much domestic work because her mother really did not want anyone else to do it.

"I can't remember my dad ever washing up. In fact when I was a teenager, I can't remember her letting me do much. I wasn't taught how to iron or asked to wash up or anything. I wasn't asked to wash my own clothes. She just accepted that she did it. I suppose it must have got her down sometimes. I remember sometimes saying, 'Oh can I cook today?', 'Shall I wash up?'. It was always a question of 'Oh no! You make too much mess'."

When Rose was a child her mother did some house cleaning for other people.

"...She did take on a job as well. She did house cleaning for other people when I was a child and later she did a little bit of factory work, part-time and eventually a telephone cleaning job after my father died."

Rose herself keeps her house in impeccable condition and the children are also very well dressed. Although she observed her mother's subservience, she herself no longer feels that her life is circumscribed by the narrow experiences of being a housewife. When she was Chris's dependant she was overwhelmed with the demands of small children but since she returned to work she has recovered some sense of her identity not simply as a wife and mother.

"Because I earn money I believe that this should be organised around what I want. I make demands now. I have what I want."

This awareness of the power which employment and income bring means that Rose is prepared to demand. However, she sees how her relationship with Chris and his income give her the material prosperity which her background makes her value. For the first time in her life she has some money.

"He's a friend (Chris) no more. But if we split up I'd lose everything and I couldn't do it. I've struggled for what I've got."

For Rose more than anything it is the lessons of the relative poverty of her background which have overwhelmed many other aspects of her life. She really appreciates all the comfort of a middle class lifestyle. However, like her mother she still does all the housework. Her standards are very high. The house is spotlessly clean and the two sons are dressed in immaculate colour co-ordinated clothes, and they have toys and music lessons and beautifully decorated bedrooms. This was not Rose's experience as a child. Not only was her family poor but her mother kept Rose and her brother close to home. They were not allowed to play with other children.

"We never played out. Mum always wanted to know where we were and I just don't remember ever having a friend round to play."

Rose has friends round for her children in a well-organised rota. She feels her childhood was deprived and is rather bitter about the narrow boundaries. Her tone of voice betrayed a continuing sense of anger with her mother, and she certainly does not rejoice in the experience of a working class childhood, even though she emerged with teaching qualifications which enabled her to move up the social ladder.

Her move away from her mother's style of mothering may not, however, take her as far as she supposes, because Rose organises everybody in the house and in her own way may be as restrictive as her mother. Her youngest son has been to a child psychologist for a number of sessions as he was timid and constantly overwhelmed at school. He is not allowed to organise his own social life; while I was present in her house, Rose rang and cancelled an 'ad hoc' arrangement her youngest son had made at school. She explained:

"I like him to have a wide circle of friends and he played with Tim last Monday."

This was Friday.

b) Kate: 'affluent paternalism', living out father's expectations

Kate was in her early thirties at the beginning of this study. Her background was upper middle class. She went to a private school and from there to university where she studied sociology. She met her husband Gerald, and they married and travelled extensively before settling in the city where he was a research student. She worked in a local bookshop until after the birth of her son.

Kate's family was "respectful middle class church-going. Dad was a banker, a hard-working Conservative". Kate looks back on life with her father. He would not allow his wife to go into employment so she took up 'good works' instead.

"My dad said 'No wife of mine is ever going to work'. So she did good works - governor of the church school and church things and my dad was very dominant so she tended to keep the peace quite a lot."

However he went away frequently, and could not control the family in his absence. Then they indulged in all the things he usually would not allow, like supper in front of the television.

"He went abroad a lot... so we relaxed when he was away because he liked things very orderly and liked things organised at home, so we used to have supper in front of the telly when he was away... when he was there we had the formal meals."

Her father used to influence his children's plans by being prepared to pay for holidays.

"The time I was in my teens my parents were quite well off and never particularly well off when I was young but when I was older they were, and I think my dad used to dish it out a bit. He didn't throw money around but he would sort of dish it out and organise and plan everything for me, like planning a holiday, planning for me to go and stay with the family in Norway which I did when I was 16."

Kate feels that living inside her father's organisation has affected her for a very long time.

"Because he knew people and organised his day at work everyday, he organised us all at home and we all sat back and let him do it. I know I've had 20 years since then to get organised but actually I'm not very good at it."

Despite her musical ability as a cellist, she is prepared to let her life take on the character of middle class mother. Her expanding family has helped with that (by 1985 she had four children).

Kate's parents live in Surrey and she sees them infrequently, although she telephones her mother once a week.

Although Kate would see her relationship with Gerald as a great improvement over the experience of her mother, her life has in fact duplicated her mother's life in its details. She stays at home with her children, and although the house is chaotic and disorderly she devotes her time to full-time motherhood.

Gerald would not block her if she wanted to return to work but the increasing size of the family makes this difficult. Also Gerald believes that nurseries are not appropriate for young children.

The middle class lifestyle which Kate knew as a child is not altogether removed from the life she now lives. Although her education has enabled her to see through her own upbringing and the relationship between her own parents, yet the same underlying pattern is clearly visible in

Kate's life. Although Gerald is not a dominating force, as her father was, nevertheless the situation somehow dictates that Kate should be at home.

Her father would allow her mother to do 'good works', and Kate herself is very involved in a modern version of 'good works' in that she spearheads the local branch of the Children in Hospital Campaign, which takes up a considerable amount of her time and energy. Her mother obviously undermined the father's authority while he was away, with television suppers and other relaxing treats, but his authority was immediately re-asserted when he returned home. From Kate's description, however, it is her father who is a vibrant and interesting person, and her mother appears as a rather mouse-like person - not really of interest except as defined against her father's expectations. And interestingly, although Kate is opposed to his political ideas, she has fulfilled many of her father's expectations.

c) Hazel: understanding her mother's life

Hazel came from an upper middle class background. She had been to grammar school and then to university, which she left before she got her degree because she was pregnant. She was a single parent mother for a couple of years before she married Harry and had another daughter.

Her mother had trained as a doctor, coming from an upper middle class background.

"My parents came from very different social classes. My mother from a long line of doctors and missionaries and that sort of thing. She is a doctor herself."

Her father was working class but had gone to university, where her parents had met.

"My father on the other hand was the son of a railwayman and brought up near Sheffield and they met when they were both at London University before the war."

Hazel was aware throughout her childhood of the differences in attitude between her parents, which came from their different backgrounds.

"So all the way through my childhood I was conscious of a conflict between them: that of a very different approach to society. Not so much to family life. I think they survived in theory at least about family life. That they came to their position through very different personal points of view. And when under stress or pushed their instinctive reactions to situations were very different because of this different background they had."

Hazel's mother did work for some periods during her childhood. She was a casualty doctor during the war, but moving away from London for safety meant she had to leave the clinics in London.

"She did not work when I was a little girl. When my older brother and sister were very small she worked but various things forced her to give up... the war meant that they moved out of London, so that she was no longer able to get to the clinics that she had been taking - she was a casualty officer for at least some of the time."

Hazel also knows that her mother found a working day and caring for two small children very difficult and stressful.

"She also found neither she nor the children (she had two children with a very small gap between them), could cope with the change in regime when she came home from work and the childminder had gone. She found it altogether very stressful."

Once her mother had given up her medical career she was very lonely. She had few friends and her father was often away.

"...and she didn't have any confidence when we were young. There were no people regularly that she went and had coffee with to chew over her problems with. So she was stuck in the house, usually on her own. My father was either school-teaching or he was out training the next Olympic team. He was never there and she had no friends. It must have been grim."

Hazel's mother was herself an orphan. She felt that this meant that her mother did not have any first-hand experience about bringing up children in a family.

"The other problem with my mother was that her child-rearing practices were almost entirely theoretical - she was an orphan. She was orphaned at a very early age, it was five, I think and she had very little instinctive awareness of family structures and how to bring up children. She never saw children being brought up. After her parents died she was brought up by maiden aunts. Then she went to boarding school at a young age as well - so she had very little clue about how to bring up children really. It did cause difficulties. She has great difficulty in freely expressing her emotions."

Although Hazel could recognise and understand the conflicts of her mother's life struggling as she was to reconcile her training as a doctor with the demands of her own children, Hazel herself has never really sorted out those conflicts in her own life. In the section on motherhood she equates 'being good' with 'staying at home'. Hazel does not like staying at home, nor doing the housework.

"I'm not terribly domesticated."

However, unlike her mother she has never tried to pursue a career and her time is spent on some part-time work and getting involved in community politics. At the time of the study, she was a local councillor for the Liberal party.

She maintains that her own family life has been influenced by her father's prolonged absences while she was growing up.

"My main problem associated with my relationship with my parents was the fact that my father was heavily involved in sport and he was practically never at home from when I was a baby, certainly until I was at school. I don't associate with him my early memories at all. However what I remember most is my siblings with my mother but hardly ever with my father and obviously this has coloured my view of family life quite a lot."

Despite her mother's qualifications and her potential for a rewarding and fulfilling life, Hazel suggests that her mother's life was actually restricted and unfulfilled. The relationship between her parents was obviously difficult and Hazel's mother could never reconcile paid work with childcare, probably because she had no support from her husband. However from Hazel's account her mother does spring to life as a serious but rather frustrated woman. Her father is a more shadowy figure, perhaps as Hazel says because he was never at home.

She suggests that she decided her own husband would be at home considerably more than her father was.

"It probably affected my choice of husband, in so far as one chooses one's husband, but I suspect that, bearing in mind how much as a little girl I didn't like having an absent father, I would have preferred a present father, I probably made jolly sure that the father I chose for my young was going to be around a bit more than my own father was."

In Hazel's account there is little emphasis on the positive aspects of her mother's achievements, because these are tempered by Hazel's understanding that childcare made it almost impossible for her mother to practise as a doctor. Perhaps there are other ways of telling this story. However Hazel, like her mother, has not worked full-time during her marriage to Harry and stayed at home for five years while Jane was small. This had led to considerable frustration and unhappiness for Hazel and she is constantly negotiating ways of fulfilling her potential without disrupting her marriage. She explained:

"I was very involved in local politics but I've pulled back recently. Harry threatened me with single parent family status if I wasn't at home a bit more."

For Hazel, as for her mother the conflicts between family and a fulfilling life in the world remains an unresolved tension.

d) Peggy: retreat from mother

Peggy was 40 at the beginning of this study. She went to a grammar school and from there to university where she met her husband. They both moved to this town, gaining similar jobs in an educational agency. Peggy left work when she was pregnant with her first child.

In looking back at her family life, she feels that her family was dominated by her mother. She recalls the claustrophobia.

"My family was rather claustrophobic looking back on it. My mother came from a family of five girls and I think of my family as being rather matriarchal because my father was the less strong of the two - considerably less strong of the two."

In Peggy's family there were only girls, and this was, Peggy says, just what her mother wanted.

"...and she had girls too, which was what she wanted because she understood girls. She was very over-protective I think, so I suppose we came from rather a close-knit family my sister and I."

Her mother wanted her daughters 'to get married' and although Peggy says she doesn't approve of her mother's ambitions for her, she actually does live them out to some extent, as she acknowledges.

"And what she wanted for us, her ambitions for us to get married too and have children and that's what she wanted and interestingly enough that's what she's got. That's funny isn't it because I don't actually approve of her ambitions."

However, Peggy did go off to university against her mother's wishes. She had wanted Peggy to go to training college feeling that it was safer.

"Her ambitions were very limited ones - she was worried. She was scared you see when I went to university. I got a place at training college first and then I got a university place, you know how you get them, they come in before your 'A' level results. She didn't want me to go to university because I think she thought that I would get beyond myself, above myself and beyond them you know."

It was a thread throughout her childhood that the family should limit themselves to what was safe.

"I think that was a sort of theme running through our childhood in a way that she was rather frightened of what she didn't understand, she didn't really understand Education, not having very much herself."

Peggy chose to go to university saying:

"I desperately wanted to get away."

Although, since she had children, Peggy has never had any paid employment, her own mother has always worked full-time. She now jointly runs a shop with her husband and works very hard.

"She does actually work, she and my father work together. He left his job and they had a shop and they made lots of money out of that. So they now work, both of them for themselves and she does work terribly hard for the business and spends very little time on housework because she has no time."

This theme of hard work also runs through the family life.

"She is one of life's hard workers, you know how some people are like that. They can't sit down. She is like that. But basically we have done what she expected us to do."

Peggy's father is a rather background figure in her explanation of her family life. She says he is rather lazy but her mother tolerates this because it enables her to be in control.

LH:

"Your father? Is he a more shadowy figure?"

Peggy:

"Yes, he is rather easy-going to the point of laziness. He would call it being tolerant but when you look at it closely it is actually - lethargy I think..."

LH:

"Did that irritate her?"

Peggy:

"No, I don't think so. I think she liked to be dominant - because she is not a very confident person outside the home, but in the home she was quite dominant. She had a little field of action."

Peggy also feels she is a dominant figure in her family.

"I think I am more dominant than Dennis because I make more fuss."

Like Hazel, Peggy lives a more stereotypical middle class woman's life than her own mother. Since she gave up paid work when her first son was born she has never been employed again. However she does not feel totally fulfilled at home and gets bored.

"I'd like to get a job because time hangs on my hands but prospects are poor once you are over forty."

There is an emotional agenda within Peggy's life because by her own admission she finds her mother 'difficult' and 'interfering'.

"I find it difficult to see her for any length of time."

This makes any positive evaluation of her mother's life a problem for Peggy because so many unresolved emotions centre on her relationship with her mother. And yet as Peggy admits she has fulfilled her mother's expectations. Her mother has been a more dominant influence in her life and emerges from Peggy's descriptions as an understandable personality whereas her father does not come to life at all.

It is not clear that Peggy's life is more fulfilling than her mother's. After going to university, which her mother has not encouraged, she settled down to a rather limited life of childcare. She is afraid to return to employment, feeling that now she is 40 there is very little point in retraining.

e) Josephine: wanting everything

Josephine was born in this town and won a scholarship to a local girls' public school. She went on to university and studied anthropology. She came back and married Barry who is also 'local'. Her parents were lower middle class and her mother was often in employment to supplement the family income. Her memory of the dynamics of the family were that her father was erratic and this made her anxious. Her father would move through different phases with changing enthusiasms which consumed all his time.

"Mother hid a lot from me, I think. My father tends to go for excesses and that really is his problem. He'll have a phase that will last four years - when I was growing up, nine, 10 or 11 or early teens, the church was his phase. He did get into High Church Anglicanism and he became a church warden and I remember that quite clearly. But there was another phase when I was very little when he was into amateur dramatics and he was out every night, so I didn't see much of him at all. Sometimes he was there, sometimes he wasn't."

This meant that her only real security was with her mother.

"So the only constant figure was my mother and my mother never left us. She was always there, and I went through a phase when I used to scream the place down if she ever did want to go out - or she used to go out very occasionally and I hated her leaving."

Josephine describes her father as very generous to her, but she does not feel that she could ever really 'relate' to him. He however believes he was a 'marvellous' father.

"And he was very, very generous, to a fault, over-indulgent, but I never could really relate to him. He would be hurt if he heard that... because he thinks he was the most marvellous father, and in some respects he was, but I never really felt relaxed with him."

Although Josephine remembers many ways in which her father did help her, he was rather an unstable personality and this made her anxious as a child.

"As I grew a lot older there were some ways he helped me a lot in academic ways for example. And he always solidly loved me and my sister - there was absolutely no question about that. But he sawed too much in himself. He is prone to depression. He is just an unstable personality. But in terms of being a father he just did the best he could because, you know, when I was little it just wasn't good enough, but it upset me deep down."

Part of the problem with her father was that he was very bad at conserving their money and so Josephine remembers terrible poverty.

"He always kept us in poverty because he was so generous. He always spent all the money. We never had any money - ever. My poor mum never had any housekeeping so we used to live in terrible, terrible poverty. It's ridiculous isn't it? That definitely coloured my character."

She suggests that her present standards of cleanliness and domestic pride stem directly from her own childhood experiences.

"I do think you go in for reactions. I do keep the house tidy. We lived in a real tip at home. I don't mind other people living in tips, I just don't want to live in it again. I've done it. I've lived in a tip for 18 years - I'm not going to do it again. I want a bit of space around me. Living in a cramped little suburban house which was dusty and dirty... when we were little, it was terrible."

Josephine and Barry lived in a large beautiful house on the highest status road and Josephine went back to work when Sam was three. The lessons about the instability of her father and the dislike of poverty struck her very, very deeply. Her mother supported her over her return to work and also helped out with childcare when there were gaps.

She has not duplicated her mother's life because she is a decisive, pragmatic person with a dominating personality, and she sees that throughout her childhood her mother was rather oppressed. Josephine has eradicated from her own life some of the causes of oppression. However the breakdown of her marriage to Barry has meant that their possessions have been divided between, them and Jo is no longer well off.

Something in Josephine's emotional make-up gave her the impetus to leave Barry and the very comfortable solid middle class life which they both shared. Josephine has a sense of self-worth which is not shared by most of these other women; and perhaps this comes from having been the major wage earner in the family. Rather like Rose, now she has returned to paid work Josephine has a sense of entitlement about what she could expect from life and therefore her decision to leave Barry and marry somebody else could be understood as part of that self confidence.

Josephine's mother has always been employed and Josephine had mentioned to me that her mother had stayed with her father despite his frequent affairs with other women. Josephine saw her mother as a victim of her father's instability.

Conclusion

In this section I have discussed women's accounts of their relationships with their parents. These relationships form a varied and contradictory resource through which women's self-understanding can be

formulated. Relationships with parents operate at many levels. The ideological commitment of our society to a certain structure of family life gives a standard by which parental relationships are judged and also enables the individual to assess their own performance as a wife or mother (or father). It would be too simple to suggest that daughters simply fulfill parents' expectations when they become wives and mothers. They are also living out the wider expectations of the rest of society and other lifestyles are often inaccessible or difficult. It is a pragmatic decision once you have married and have children to stay at home with them. Other options (as I discussed in Chapter One) are quite difficult.

Whether their mothers worked or stayed at home, none of these women really had a positive evaluation of their mothers' lives. These women concentrated on the conflicts and the unresolved tensions in their mothers' lives.

When women take on a domestic role similar to their mothers', they can point to the contradictions in their mothers' lives but suggest that their own lives are an improvement because their husbands 'help' more. However, what these women have in common with their mothers is a life within social and political practices which discriminate against women and hold profoundly contradictory implications for them.

Through discussion of Kate and Peggy, I discussed how women may fulfil parental expectations even though they consciously do not desire to do so. I have also discussed how material deprivation in childhood and the resulting insecurity led Rose and Josephine into paid employment to gain material comforts in their lives. Of this small study of women's family life, it is interesting that Rose and Josephine both have the drive to find paid employment and organise their lives to include paid work, and anxiety

about poverty seems to have motivated them both. They both won scholarships to grammar schools and were able to gain access to academic success which in turn improved their potential employment status. Both are teachers.

Obviously from such a small group of women it is risky to generalise about the relationship between domestic and career commitments. However a larger study of parental background could be very illuminating.

The men

All of the men I talked to were brought up in families witnessing intense relationships between parents. The intensity of family life as they experienced it was to be duplicated in their own adult lives in a rather different way. Some of these men are married to the women in the first half of this chapter.

a) Barry: 'a different kind of father'

Barry came from an upper middle class background and he went to a private school. He then rejected university for an apprenticeship in antique restoration which is now his work. His family lived near this town and Josephine, his wife, was a member of the same Buddhist study group. After they were married they were able to buy a house on the Denton Estate with no mortgage thanks to funds from Barry's family.

He describes his schooling as an extension of his family life. He went to school with 'normal' children, who came from intact nuclear families before divorce became commonplace.

"I went to a mixed public school - in with a lot of other people who were relatively normal - good families - no children with social hang-ups. Back in the late fifties, early sixties people would hold their marriages together much more than they would do now so they all had

mums and dads and no split up families. They must have been fairly comfortably off or they wouldn't have been there."

Because he went to a mixed school he got to know quite a few girls.

"So I grew up with girls... I don't find women at all of a mystery."

Barry experienced his father as a rather distant figure and compares to that himself as a father.

"My father was very old-fashioned - was almost a stranger to me because he was always going off to work and things and there's definitely bits of that in me... My father was a mystery figure."

Barry suggests that things have now changed and the later generations of fathers are more accessible.

"But the generation that I am in, the sixties, I'm much more easy-going. You've got to have regard for what my background was. My mother was very neutral and we got on well and we still do."

Barry himself is a different kind of father. He works at home and took care of Sam in the afternoons. He is often at the school collecting his children or at the Co-op for last minute shopping.

Despite his manner which is unassertive, and his lifestyle which is home-centred, he insists he remains 'a father' with some distance from his children.

"The male part of me remains predominant. I'm not going to try to be be motherly... I find fawning fathers a bit much and I don't think I'd want to be quite like that. I remain slightly aloof I think."

This sense of maintaining boundaries and keeping a certain emotional distance is associated with 'fawning fathers'. However Barry has clearly moved right away from his father's style of fatherhood and this move has been encouraged even further since Barry and Josephine split up. While he was

married Barry could maintain some distance from his children, relinquishing the chores and childcare to her in the evening. Recently Barry's elder son

has come back to live with him. It seems quite possible that his younger son might follow. Both spend the holidays with him and he finds it difficult to work.

"I'm relieved that term has started so I can get back to work."

This could have been spoken by any employed mother.

Barry also now cooks or at least buys food which does not need too much preparation. The necessities of life have moved Barry right away from a style of fatherhood whereby the father is a stranger, as his own father was to him. His father was such a stranger that Barry could hardly be encouraged to discuss him at all. He describes his mother as 'neutral', and she does support whatever decisions he makes. She helps him financially if he gets into debt especially since he has one child with him.

Barry's lifestyle, while developed out of past experiences seems now to have its own momentum carried along by pragmatic decisions about the present and the future. As Barry explains:

"I'm going to be flexible."

b) Martin: a womanly father

Martin was born in a working class home and went to a local grammar school. He then went to college and trained as a teacher. He is now the deputy head of a junior school, having made a career in primary schools.

He married Maria when they were in their early twenties. She is also local.

Although Martin acknowledges his father's influence on him he also feels that his father was not a model of manhood. On the contrary he was motherly.

"I suppose genetically my father's effect on me was considerable. I don't want to be like him in some respects because he is over-mothering and over-protective."

His father was anxious about the details of Martin's life and while he was a teenager Martin found this very irksome.

"He is like a mother in some ways. He would worry about the sort of clothes I was wearing, whether I was warm enough, you know, even when I was 16 and I had a scooter, he would say 'have you got enough clothes on?' you know."

Martin very strongly rejects this model of fatherhood offered by his own father.

"I don't want to be like my father like that."

He found it rather claustrophobic and has consequently pushed his father away.

"He is quite a soft person, quite possessive, that is he would like to keep more tabs on us, he would like to know more what we are doing and he would like us to be closer as families but we have stayed at a distance."

For the second time Martin repeats that he does not want to be like his father although he does want to be a loving parent.

"But I don't want to be that - I want to be loving - seen to be loving and caring but I want my children to make up their own minds about things like that. I mean them to be independent."

Martin feels that his father being over-protective did not allow him to gain his independence, although he was very affectionate. Martin says he is aware of his father in him and struggles against his influence.

"In fact he is far more openly affectionate than my mother. And I suppose that I am a fairly affectionate person but I don't want to be like that, so I am conscious of my father very much, in me, and I am kicking against that side of him, he is a nice bloke but..."

Recalling his teenage years Martin remembers one incident clearly when his father made him feel very inadequate in front of Maria, who later became his wife.

"I did have memories of teenage years, when I wanted to be independent and he kept making decisions for me, or wouldn't let me make decisions. When I was taking Maria out I brought her home to our home and it was a cold day and my parents weren't there and I started making a fire and he came in (I mean I was 16 or 17) and he said 'You don't do it like that' and he pushed me out of the way and started doing it in front of Maria (who I was trying to impress) you know."

This Martin suggests is not the way to encourage independence.

"...and I don't think that's quite the way to foster skills and independence and so on. I have somehow managed it since, I don't know how. I suppose a determination just to do things because I wasn't allowed to."

Martin was not very open about his mother. As with many other people, one parent seemed to dominate, and for Martin his father was the most dominant character. His account was full of his father and contained very few comments about his mother. Negotiating masculinity forces Martin to reject the possessive warmth of his father. In establishing his identity as a father he had to reject the man he knew most closely. It is certainly his father's motherly qualities which he remembers 20 years later. This emotional rejection of this side of his father's nature does not mean that Martin rejects motherly warmth as such.

"I think we are warm with the children. Maria more so - she is very spontaneous and loving with them."

But it seems that he does reject this motherly identity for himself.

c) Jeffrey: dominant father and servile mother

Jeffrey was born into a working class London family. His description of the politics of his family life with a dominant father and a subservient mother reveal a rather dispiriting vision of motherhood. Jeffrey's father was away in the war and his first memories were of being at home with his mother in London.

"I was born in 1938 and my father went away to the war in 1939. He returned home five or six years later in 1945. So in fact of the time I spent, other than that first babyhood year (I can't remember much about that) just odd flashes come to mind. I spent my whole time with my mother and brother and grandmother, in an area that was just south of London and there was plenty of bombs falling, stuff like that."

When his father came back he was a strict disciplinarian.

"...when he actually returned he turned out to be a very severe disciplinarian, extremely strict."

At that point Jeffrey's experience of the family began to become traditional nuclear family life. His mother was pushed into a servile position while still trying to protect the children.

"My mother being totally servile to my father, totally identified with cooking and indulging the children and protecting them against father, but not in any overt way, you know, by stealth."

Rather cowed by his father Jeffrey became a conformist. He tried to please his father especially by success at school. He maintained a relationship with his father whereby they could talk and discuss things.

"What happened was that I developed a good boy syndrome, and basically did things that he liked and I suppose it was aspiring for me to get to grammar school, which I did... I never hated my father although my brother did. I never hated my father basically because he was also someone I could talk to."

His father did not withdraw from the family. On the contrary he organised everything and had ultimate control.

"As a father it wasn't that he wasn't involved with the family. My impression was that he was very involved and he ran the show basically, and took an interest in the kids. I mean in terms of what he wanted, to making them into certain sorts of people."

Jeffrey has said he is an obsessional character rather like his father, and wonders if he has inherited this particular trait. Jeffrey is obsessed by work. His father has hobbies.

"The other great thing about him, and I don't know whether you know it makes one feel that it might be hereditary, he was also an obsessional except that his obsessions were very much home-bound but he had always had three hobbies he had always continued those and now although he's 75 he is still fanatical about his major hobby, racing pigeons."

Despite all his reservations Jeffrey continues to admire his father because "he's still very much alive".

"What I feel about my father is he may not have been a very good husband, he may not in the long run have been a particularly good father but I can actually forgive him because he is still alive, in other words as he has got older he hasn't sort of given up and he is still enthusiastic about a few subjects... I can see now that he's a real sod. And yet I feel that he has had these passionate interests that have endured through his life. And so he hasn't in a sense shrivelled up and died. So that's one positive thing that I feel I have got from him."

So Jeffrey admires his father's continuing engagement with life. His own life has been very different. He raised himself from his working class origins and is now a university professor. Janet, his ex-wife, was never servile, but now they have split up she says she was submerged by family

life for a number of years. Jeffrey lived out his father's expectations in that he is successful and hardworking.

Jeffrey's mother comes out of his account as a rather servile, menial person who was submerged by the dominant personality of Jeffrey's father and Jeffrey seems to feel rather sorry for her. But his story is a celebration of the tenacity and personality of his father and how that reflects in his own life. The fact that his mother survived a marriage with a man who sounds rather like a bully is left relatively unexamined.

d) Gerald: admiring his dad

Gerald is now a science teacher at a local comprehensive although he was a research fellow in one of the colleges of the university. He and Kate now have four children and Gerald undertakes a substantial amount of work although with some complaints from Kate (see Fatherhood). His family were Catholics and his mother worked almost full-time, but an aunt lived with them and took over considerable domestic work.

For Gerald the life he witnessed and experienced in the family was intense and companionable and very traditional. He likes the closeness of family life.

LH:

"What sort of marriage did your parents have?"

Gerald:

"Very traditional. I mean they were intense and religious in the traditional sense and therefore all those sort of ideas of fidelity, and all the religious overtones of sex and its place in the marriage. So yes, very traditional mutual sort of marriage, I would say pretty close that's why I like family life."

This closeness did not preclude hostility and argument. These were very much part of the relationship between Gerald's parents.

"You know in a sense they would have tremendous rows, that would be absolutely part of their relationship. I never ever felt as a child these rows would undermine their relationship. I mean looking back surprisingly now that I find it secure because of that aspect. I feel that their relationship was quite good, but quite hostile."

His mother worked as a piano teacher and an aunt lived with them and provided some support services.

"Both my parents worked, but then we had an aunt who lived with us all her life, she never worked and it was good to have her there."

Gerald was quick to defend his mother from the accusation of having left her children before school age. Later she went back to work.

LH:

"Your mother worked right through your childhood?"

Gerald:

"Oh gosh no. She wouldn't have done that! But as soon as my young brother was in primary school she went out to work."

His mother taught the piano and also ran the household.

"She taught music, piano. And then she worked jolly hard, because she still ran the house and did her job. My aunt was always there but never did any of the hard work."

Gerald really liked his father and although he has not consciously modelled himself on him he says he would not mind being like him in some ways.

"I don't think mine was a bad father to grow up with. I can certainly say that. I wouldn't follow him consciously but I did admire him in all sorts of ways. And I would be very happy if I followed him in some ways in some respects, but more as a person."

The companionship of family life, its intensity and closeness is what Gerald wanted to duplicate in his own life. Although no longer a Catholic, his family of four children does reflect a traditional Catholic lifestyle, even if both he and Kate insist that the last child was a mistake.

In retrospect it is his father, not his mother, whom he admires and perhaps unconsciously emulates. It was clear from earlier interview material that Gerald's father was not concerned with childcare, as Gerald suggests that he had not thought childcare was part of the male role until he was in his teens. He had not observed it at home. However, when he was more closely questioned about his father, it was his stable personality Gerald remembers with affection.

"He quietly got on with his life."

As with other men, Gerald does not concentrate on his mother's ability to be in paid employment and run the house; it is his father he mentions, even though the questions were about 'family life' and 'parents'. His mother's achievements are unacknowledged and his father occupies a central place in Gerald's memory.

e) Chris: life in a fish shop

Chris went to grammar school followed by a degree at a polytechnic. He is married to Rose and they have two children. He is a civil engineer and designs central heating systems. His background was upper working class.

Both parents worked in Chris' family. They owned a fish and chip shop. He remembers that his father was always working and went from work to the pub.

"My father spent too long working when he was in business. He spent too many hours on that, the rest of the time he spent in the pub. I suppose in retrospect he was somewhat inadequate as a father really, by modern standards."

Chris suggests that fatherhood in the past was well defined as "being a provider. In his case, however his parents worked together."

"There was the more definite role I think in his time. The definite breadwinner's role so to speak. (The fact that my mother didn't spend any time with us either is neither her nor there.)"

Chris' mother also worked in the fish and chip shop but Chris does not feel that he and his sister suffered too much.

LH:

"What was your mother doing?"

Chris:

"Working with him as well."

LH:

"In the shop?"

Chris:

"Yes. A fish shop. They used to work incredibly long hours... but then when I look back I don't feel I particularly suffered."

The two children were left very much to their own devices but they managed to survive.

LH:

"So did somebody come and look after you?"

Chris:

"No. We survived among ourselves, my sister and I (my elder sister by four years). Yes, I can remember (it horrifies me now) things like lighting coal fires when I was about five. Nobody else in the house."

These descriptions make Chris sound like a rather neglected child. Would he agree with that?

Chris:

"Not really. We survived."

LH:

"Would you say your mother was 'inadequate' too?"

Chris:

"No, she did her best."

Interestingly Chris continues to identify with his father as 'the breadwinner' although his mother was engaged in identical work in the chip shop. However he is also more willing to label his father as 'inadequate' than his mother although his mother did not go to the pub as often. Sometimes she did however.

"If they were both in there we'd hang outside the door eating crisps and sometimes we'd stick our heads round and say 'are you coming home yet?'"

This rather pathetic scene does not sound like a traditional stable childhood. Apart from cooking fish and chips in the shop Chris' dad did not cook or clean. His mother did, and I pointed out her double workload, but Chris could not really appreciate her commitment.

LH:

"Your mum worked all day and cleaned the house in the evenings and weekends?"

Chris:

"Suppose so."

Chris remained unenthusiastic about either of his parents and although he went on to describe time spent with his elder sister, both his parents

remained rather shadowy figures and it was not clear what emotional family dynamics led Chris to his present position.

His own life duplicates that of his parents in some ways. Rose now works full-time and he has given her emotional support to get back to work, although Rose maintains that the practical support has been less forthcoming.

f) Dennis: a witness to his father's breakdown

Dennis went to university and now runs a large university department. He and Peggy have three children.

Dennis had very little experience of being fathered because his own father had a breakdown when Dennis was young. He explains his life both as 'average' and how his mother returned to work when his father was ill.

"We were fairly average educated middle class I should think. Both parents have degrees. My father was a librarian in the university. My mother had resumed work since she had children, I think I was 11. My father was very ill so she had to go out and work to keep the family. And so went into teaching as people do, being the only thing you can do, she hadn't worked for years."

His mother was a powerful influence in his life, reflecting the values of that time. She had been very strict even making decisions about her children's friends.

"My mother has changed enormously, since we were kids. When we were kids she was very strict about us going to bed early. We couldn't go out to things that other kids went out to. She was incredibly strict about my sisters, about who their friends were. She tried to pick and control them, and that sort of thing. She didn't approve of my older sister's friend whose father was a policeman. It just wasn't right at all because she was obviously going to leave school at 'O' levels and we were supposed to go to university."

He says that his mother has changed now and would look back on these ideas she had held with some humour. Society has changed and so has she.

"Nowadays mother can see the silly, funny side of that. And she laughs about it. She wouldn't dream of expecting us to behave like... I think she would be shocked to see us carrying on those values. So in a sense really I think the main changes have been the changes for a changed society not really to do with family things."

His father Dennis described as a 'non-person'. From having a nervous breakdown as a younger man he has now 'deteriorated completely'.

"My father had a nervous breakdown and although he recovered enough after a year to go back he sort of hobbled along into early retirement at 60. He is now very ill in a mental sense. He has deteriorated completely as a person. He can only remember things that have happened that day... he is in a sense a non-person in the family if you like. It's a big strain on my mother. My mother has changed and adapted in a sense that he couldn't adapt."

Dennis attributes his father's breakdown to having been brought up by a woman. He did not learn how to be a man. He was rather introverted and intellectual and could not survive the male world of school or work.

"One of the influences on him was that his father died when he was three and he was brought up by a woman (Dennis' grandmother) who was unable to prepare him for the ways boys have to behave when they are at school and so on. I think that was a disaster. He was the swot, he could never participate in boyish things, he was never tough enough to survive what it's really like when you become a man. So the pressure of work increased and he couldn't cope with it. And it really grew and grew into a nervous breakdown."

Being brought up by a woman was also Dennis' own experience of childhood, but Dennis managed to avoid the same outcome as his father.

Dennis says he was very aware of the effect his father's decisions had on him. He also suffered at school but not quite as badly as his own father.

"So I think that's an influence on me. I saw it as a boy when my father was taken away from me, through mental disorders, his father through death. I was very conscious of the effect it had on me, of having a sort of inadequate father because I could see that at school I couldn't quite cope but, I wasn't as bad as his case (his father's)."

This explanation assumes that toughness is part of a male identity and is a way of identifying a man. When Dennis spoke earlier about bringing up his sons he continually emphasised how they must be prepared for teasing at school, how they must not overreact when hurt but develop other so-called manly attributes. His own experiences of school life and his understanding of what happened to his father, undoubtedly contributed to this attitude towards his sons and how they must be prepared for life. Dennis' story is interesting therefore because of the implications for the development of the male character. Boys need men to give them a good example and prepare them for the world of men. He could have told the story differently emphasising the strength and tenacity of his mother who must have drawn on considerable resources to maintain the life of herself and her children in the situation in which she found herself. Dennis does imply that if boys are brought up by women alone they may later have a nervous breakdown. His father was brought up by a woman alone and had a nervous breakdown. He was also brought up by a woman alone but somehow avoided that fate. It must therefore follow that not all upbringing by single parent mothers is a disaster for their sons. However, Dennis uses this story in his life to defend both the family, his method of child-rearing which involves toughening up his sons for the world of men.

Conclusion

In this section I have discussed men's relationships with their parents and the emphasis again has been on the idea that these are a varied and contradictory resource in the lives of these men from which they have individually drawn a number of aspects of their own self understanding.

Narratives

In looking at the stories which people tell about their lives it is relevant to consider that from a lifespan of 35 to 40 years, the potential number of stories a person could tell about their experience is great in number.

The stories which people told me about their lives are therefore drawn out from their experience to reinforce a certain interpretation of events or illustrate an argument or line of thought. For example Dennis told the story of his father's mental breakdown.

Dennis:

"My father had a nervous breakdown... he has deteriorated completely as a person."

This story about his father was told to highlight Dennis' decisions about 'the world of men' and what it means to be a real man in the world. He could have told this story in a number of ways featuring the tenacity and strength of his mother and grandmother both of whom were actually or virtually single parents. However the point of this story for Dennis justifies his own belief that the world of men is a struggle and that his own sons must be prepared to live in this world. It is a reason for not considering the roots of sexism.

Jeffrey also told a story about his father.

Jeffrey:

"I was born in 1938 and my father went away to the war in 1939... when he actually returned he turned out to be a very severe disciplinarian, extremely strict."

Jeffrey's story about his father continues to explain how he was authoritarian and forced his mother to be 'totally servile'. However Jeffrey does not dislike his father. He chose this story about his family life rather than highlighting, except in a negative way, the experience of his mother, because in some ways he identifies with his father. Jeffrey likes him because, although now an old man:

Jeffrey:

"He is still enthusiastic... he is still very much alive."

Jeffrey is of course completely different from his own father, easy-going, indulgent and relatively prepared to participate in childcare and housework. However in the university he is a guru figure for many students, usually men. They admire his unorthodox teaching style and unusual ideas. In his own way, Jeffrey lives in the world of men and benefits from the contributed resources of a wife, who, if not servile, is certainly hardworking.

Malcolm also gives the story about his mother's life and her relationship with his father.

Malcolm:

"My father is an accountant... My mother wasn't educated for anything in particular - worked in the BBC or something I think."

Although Malcolm knew about his father's life and work in great detail, his mother is represented as being almost without a biography. Her early life appears to have no interest for him. The central feature of the story

about his childhood is his father's work and ability to make money.

Consequently, in his own life it is not difficult to see how relationships in his family revolve around his rather authoritarian approach to his wife and children.

The stories which men choose to tell seem to reveal their deep-seated commitment to certain ways of life and modes of thought. Looking closely through the transcript material, the stories told by women often centre upon contradictions in the lives of their mothers or areas of conflict in their own lives.

Hazel told the story about her mother.

Hazel:

"... she is a doctor herself... She did not work when I was a little girl... she didn't have any confidence when we were young... She was stuck in the house, usually on her own. My father was either school-teaching or he was out training the next Olympic team..."

Hazel's life is a great improvement on this as she herself suggests. However she is still tied by her husband Harry's ideas about a woman's place, even if she had negotiated wider limits than her mother.

Rose tells of her mother's life:

Rose:

"My mother.. she had great pride in keeping the house looking nice... I can't remember my dad ever washing up."

Rose herself undertakes nearly all the housework and childcare as her responsibility although she feels that Chris helps which her father never did. Once again this story reinforces how Rose's life is an improvement on her mother's life because she has renegotiated some of the limits.

An interesting aspect of these stories of childhood and descriptions of relationships with parents is the process of selection which encourages

people to emphasise one aspect of their background rather than another. There is a complex process of influence between childhood experience and adult life which is only touched upon in this section. For women the acceptance of a period of domesticity, which might encompass a whole adult lifetime seems to involve an understanding of the workload and conflicts of the mother and responding to that. Many of these women speak negatively of their fathers, implying or stating that their own husbands are an improvement. Domestic responsibilities by implication do not involve such conflict for this generation of women, because they are not doing it in response to authoritarian expectations of the fathers. Life can be improved by choosing a non-authoritarian husband or in the case of Anna and Peggy, a more competent husband. This then may avoid some of the problems which their mothers faced. This solution leaves these women with the same conflicts as their mothers but with problems about being unable to understand their vague discontents because their husbands are supportive and kindly.

So by getting married and giving up paid work to have children these women are opting into a certain kind of relationship of dependency which has strictly drawn boundaries. When women tell stories from their lives it is the complications, the contradictions, the negotiations and the ability to live with diversity which provides a focus. The boundaries have already been accepted. Women live out the contradictions which men do not therefore have to take on. When it comes to the politics of everyday life, the culture of pushchairs, housework, shopping, cleaning, it continues to be women who take on the servicing of others. The contradictions between women's expectations of life and men's continues to be widely divergent. By concentrating on the contradictions but never specifying how they are

resolved against the interests of women, the politics of the situation rarely become explicit.

In considering the way that men related to their fathers there is no obvious appropriation of 'fatherliness'. Drawing on experiences from their own lives leads these men to select various examples from their parents' lives to justify their current attitudes. What is apparent however is that their childhood experiences are quite different but for these men their current lifestyles are often similar to their own father's. They all, apart from Barry, have wives at home. They all consider themselves as breadwinners.

For the men there is appreciation of father's masculinity even where, as in Jeffrey's case, the father assaulted the mother. There is also a desire to identify with masculinity as an aspect of the identity (apart from Roger who refused to take up the debate with his own father). Although these men value womanhood as a resource system, most do not value any aspect of it as an identity for themselves. This is not how they wish to present themselves to the world. For some men, womanliness in themselves is repressed in order to continue to enjoy the benefits of masculinity - the career and the masculine lifestyle.

Another point of interest emerging from these short case studies is that despite differences in class, in childhood experiences and in present financial status, all these men have current lifestyles which are similar to each other. They all have established careers. They all have emotional and friendly relationships with their own children, not trying to maintain the distance which seems to have characterised fatherhood in the past.

CHAPTER 10

THE LANGUAGE OF EQUALITY

This study has used a group of parents in a middle class community in a city in the South of England to reflect upon parental identity, exploring how it is that women still tend to be responsible for childcare and domestic service, while middle class men have careers and women largely do not. I reviewed theories of the family to ascertain the extent to which they consider the development of parental identities. I reviewed empirical material which pointed to the continuing inequalities in marriage generally in our society and to a legal system which underpins these inequalities.

I have approached the study of understanding parental identity through a concern with contradiction and conflict in the lives of men and women in this study. I evaluated some of their conflicts with respect to the commitment to a certain kind of family life which is characteristic of this area of the city, to see how this influenced their lives as mothers or fathers.

In this section I shall summarise the research material of this thesis reflecting on the organisation of motherhood and fatherhood in this community. The family was much in evidence as a focus for life in the society and discussions showed a strong commitment to 'family life' by both men and women. The family was seen as the appropriate setting for childhood, and within the family the lives of women and men were different. This was justified by differing kinds of commitment of women and men to children. Many men saw themselves as, or lived the role of, a 'provider'. Women were seen to have greater emotional involvement with their children.

In the next two chapters on motherhood and fatherhood I probed these differences more closely and tried to ascertain how they were rationalised

and justified by the people involved. The framework for this analysis lay in the elaboration of contradictions. There are a number of possible lifestyles open to educated women from the middle class, and staying at home with children involves a choice and a denial of other possibilities.

The way this choice to stay at home appears to be normal and inevitable is an aspect of the working of ideology. This is underpinned by power relations between groups, in this case women and men. Men as a class continue to have a greater economic and political power. Access to power entails the ability to dominate the material conditions of social interaction and thereby maintain the present organisation as natural, normal and inevitable. John Thompson (1984) suggests that powerful groups will maintain the status quo through concealment, dissembling and denial. I have analysed the empirical material as a search for the ideological underpinnings of middle class family life through these three. Rather, therefore, than taking the material at its face value I have disentangled some of the references as evidence for the existence of relations of domination between men and women.

In order to sustain relations of domination there is a level of subterfuge which is employed by the powerful. They can mobilise meaning to their advantage through a denial of their power by re-naming oppression as equality and by rationalising it as natural and normal although it maintains an imbalance in power relations. This process of concealing relations of power and domination is complicated by a process which conceals the concealment. This is often done by shifting responsibility onto women for their lack of power. Women have chosen motherhood (so the argument runs) and some of these men have even attempted to encourage their wives into a fuller participation in the world and into greater equality.

This conceals their devotion to their careers and the domestic servicing which thus entails, for which a wife is essential.

Women talked about having children because they wanted them and they decided on the number and the spacing. Men also wanted children but their wives seemed to choose the moment. Men appeared to opt out of the decision-making or were kept out of the decision-making. The position of mother therefore became one from which women could act and make decisions, in this case about babies. However, the result of this decision was often to tie the woman into the home given all the pre-suppositions about the nature of motherhood. The result of ostensible male apathy over decisions about having children was that a man could suggest that it was his wife's responsibility because she had made the decision. His life was less altered than hers although his workload may have expanded.

In considering issues about staying at home, Carole and Peggy were convinced it was a correct decision although both had suffered from long periods of depression. All the women did stay at home with young children, some expressed ambivalence (eg. Rose) but the lack of childcare facilities meant that the issues were resolved so that they remained a traditional mother until nursery places were available for children. Kate admitted to wanting more stimulation sometimes than just the company of her children but was not often able to get it through paid employment. Men at home expressed less ambivalence. Some complained about the level of domestic or childcare tasks (Jeffrey, Gerald) but were able to concentrate on their careers and justified their domestic inadequacies in terms of commitment to work. Parenthood was not such an area of ambivalence for men. Their identities were securely in their careers.

At work men felt their jobs to be a challenge - a creative outlet. Many of these men were competitive and careerist, and work took up their

best effort. However, women often felt paid work was a struggle because they continued to have responsibility for childcare and housework. Because this responsibility did not shift from them they opted out of the job market. Women who did return to work gained support, more emotional than practical, from their husbands. Single parent working mothers were burdened in exactly the way the traditional mothers feared. They worked all day in employment and came back to domestic chores.

The traditional mothers did not necessarily escape problems of guilt and anxiety because they stayed at home. Many felt that they were inadequate, or unappreciated. Single parents also expressed anxieties about their childcare. Similar anxieties did not seem to emerge for the fathers. Their lives were enriched by their emotional relationships with their children which seemed to be less complicated by anxieties than the mothers'. Both men and women suggested that the investment mothers made in their children could account for greater maternal guilt in regard to them.

For men, fathering was therefore a more direct task. It involved being a provider and helping out at home. However, the second rarely overwhelmed the first, whereas the first often overwhelmed the second. Men were frequently unavailable because of their jobs. Mothering was seen as being a resource for the whole family. It could expand to fill every day with childcare, domestic work and wifely duties. Being the resource for the family often meant a suspension of these women's own lives and desires. Her relationship with him reflected this. She supported him in his career and when he was unavailable she filled the gaps. However, in his relationship to her the men saw their wives principally as mothers and supported and encouraged them in this role.

In 'Special Topics' I showed how many aspects of family life the domestic workload, finance, sexuality, continued to operate to the advantage of the male provider. Only on divorce were women able to articulate some aspects of their oppression which had been concealed during marriage. After divorce men continued to fare better than women, financially, materially, emotionally and physically, and for many single parent mothers this fuelled their long suppressed anger.

From this brief summary of the research material it is difficult to maintain a view of increasing equality between the sexes because women and men lead very different lives. However there is an intellectual and cultural pressure in the academic middle class to justify family life in terms of equality.

It is important therefore to look at specific chains of reasoning and explanation by which people justify their lives. I shall reconsider some of the transcript material to discern some of the underlying assumptions which keep middle class family life in balance on the Denton Estate.

Men's language

Some men discuss their lives in terms of a language of equality because they imply that life could have been organised differently. Dennis believes that there is no necessity about the current organisation of family life in our society.

Dennis:

"I can't see why mothers have to be in the house and fathers out or vice versa. Not in our kind of society."

Dennis states that our society is potentially egalitarian and couples can make varying arrangements when children are born. In drawing on equality

here Dennis is involved in a process of concealment. Firstly, as we have seen in past chapters, Dennis is an obsessive worker who comes home 'clapped out'. Dennis relies on Peggy to provide complete domestic services. He suggests that he could stay at home because he can 'work just as well at home'. He is preparing his sons by toughening them up for the world of men. Single parent mothers make him anxious. His father was brought up by his grandmother alone and this was 'a complete disaster'.

In Dennis' world view not many contradictions exist. The one thing which is out of place is the language of equality which does not relate to the organisation of the rest of his life.

Gerald also implies equality.

Gerald:

"I don't think it's been necessary for Kate to be at home. Not at all."

However Gerald himself is not strong on undertaking domestic chores. Furthermore he is very committed to his work. He was reluctant to take time off even when Kate had pneumonia and the doctor demanded that he stay at home.

As part of his intellectual interest in equality, Gerald suggested part-time work as a solution to giving both partners paid employment. He felt he could enjoy part-time employment.

Gerald:

"If both parents did part-time jobs, that might be something else altogether... I believe I would quite thrive on that, provided that I could fulfil some ambition that was in it."

As Gerald says, he needs to feel ambitious, and this led him to consider a host of other problems associated with part-time work - mainly

all the people who were working full-time. But then how to cope with having a career?

This is, of course, a woman's problem precisely, but not one that Gerald is prepared to take on for himself or even to recognise as applying to wives in general and his wife in particular. He is very tied up with the world of competition and work and he does not allow many contradictions to surface. His life would be very different without a wife at home.

Chris speaks about mutuality. He suggests that he undertakes an increasing share of childcare.

Chris:

"I think over the last few years things have probably got better and better as far as us sharing the work in the house and sharing the children."

However, from the transcripts it emerges that Chris rises late, rushes to work taking sandwiches made by Rose, washes up in the evening but does not cook; if things really have got better recently, it must be by moving from a situation where he was almost uninvolved with housework and childcare to a minor involvement.

Different lives

Many of the men suggest that although the lives of husband and wife are different, this does not necessarily mean that they are unequal.

Harry:

"Certainly we have different responsibilities, but I wouldn't say we are not equal."

Martin:

"Equality doesn't mean being exactly the same. I think of Maria as my equal."

Alasdair:

"We are equal but our lives are different."

Jeffrey:

"I respect what Janet does more than vice versa I suspect. I'm less equal in that equation."

However in their discussions on the subject, these men ignore or forget that there are areas of life which are substantially closed to women but the reverse is not really true. Furthermore the references to equality and mutuality are in a context where most men expressing their commitment to family life clearly mean the traditional nuclear family.

Martin:

"We see the unity of the family, the closeness of the family as being important."

Barry:

"I think it's nice if the children can have a cushioned life and I think that two parents can do that better than one."

Dennis:

"I still consider what our family is to be important. I can see in certain other people's lives that if you don't have a fairly cohesive family... people just seem to go to pieces."

Gerald views family life as a 'kind of package'.

Gerald:

"It's a kind of package in a way... first acquire a spouse and then clearly, the children will follow if you are lucky, and I suppose that's how I've gone into it."

In the interviews many of the men saw motherhood as central to family life thorough women's commitment to staying at home with children. These are some of many comments about women as mothers.

Jeffrey:

"I thought Janet was... problematic... it's been almost the reverse... she's been pretty adaptable... she had a fairly strong conviction that for those initial years she ought to be there with them."

Dennis:

"I think Peggy would have been reluctant to try to combine young child-rearing with work."

Alex:

"Jenny seems to like it (staying at home)."

Women at home have benefits for men, and perhaps not surprisingly most of the men believed it to be right and appropriate. Many also suggested that this arrangement happened by chance, while re-affirming equality in the home. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that these middle class career men justify their lives, in a male dominated society which gives them priority and power, by concealment and dissembling. While power can be denied by invoking free will, men can point to the freedom of choice which women have and thereby claim that the life of middle class Denton Estate reflects women's desire. Men speak the language of patriarchal relations. Their acknowledgement of equality furthers the cause of patriarchy because it oils the wheels of oppression. None of the men I talked to in this community are prepared to give up or even to further modify their position as men in the world.

Women's language

Looking more closely at women's language it is clear that the paradoxes which would arise in discussions about equality are rarely allowed to surface. Equality is not on the agenda. These women have accepted 'normal' patriarchal relations. The community wives accept that

the child is paramount and children's best interests are served by the constant attention of the mother. It appears to be almost secondary that male interests are also served when women stay at home. The new fatherhood research emphasises the role of both parents. If a child's health and security can be secured by the loving attention of one or two adults there is no reason why women should be sole care-givers. The reason lies in the politics of labour and employment.

When men are discussed among the women it is often to evaluate the extent to which they will 'help' or 'support'. Raymond is held to be a good husband as is Jeffrey. Rose maintains that Chris is better than some others although she also suggests frequently that he is lazy, boring and utterly self-obsessed.

A considerable proportion of interview material with women centred upon the apparently non-negotiable nature of fatherhood and therefore of motherhood. Maria is interested in a full-time teaching post, but she is afraid that Martin's work may suffer if she takes the job. Peggy hates cooking but doesn't think Dennis ought to do it. 'I think of it as my job'. Jenny knows that Alex will not take care of the children even if he is at home between 9 am and 6 pm.

Depression

In looking closely at transcripts from women it is not only what is said which gives valuable insights, it is also what is implied: a reading of demands, an examination of the areas of silence, where some explanations might be expected but are never forthcoming. The women I interviewed are not feminists. They are not aware of analyses of the politics of everyday life. They are not tuned into sexism. However for many women issues about

feeling oppressed emerge through conversations about depression or 'feeling low'. Half the women I talked to spontaneously discussed depression as part of conversations about family life. Depression is so common in the experience of women it has taken over from hysteria as the symptom of women's lives in patriarchal society.

Jenny:

"I didn't really know what was the matter but sitting on the settee for hours and crying. That was about three months. I think it was a virus because Anna said she felt like that too."

Tess:

"If I'd started to scream but I didn't scream I sank. After Alice I sank."

Helen:

"I felt desperate but I didn't want it to be about the baby. I felt completely empty."

Rose:

"When I rang her on her birthday (Helen) she started crying. I just ran round 'cos I know what was the matter. How did I know? Because I'd had it."

Barbara:

"Somebody told me I was very depressed. I knew I was tired - I could hardly move but I hadn't put that name to it."

These are just some of the things women said about depression. Others appear in former chapters. Depression does not just relate to childbirth. Jenny was depressed before her last pregnancy, not after. Helen's children were toddlers.

The silence comes in the space where there might be an analysis or explanation for periods of depression. No explanations were offered. Women accept depression as part of life, and they are relieved when depression lifts.

Women and marriage

A middle class life on the Denton Estate implies a certain quality of relationship between women and husbands. In the ideal the husband is the friend and companion. When these women resist it is the relationship which takes the strain. However the resistance often takes forms which are self-defeating. Women have babies that their husbands do not want. Rumours about arguments circulate among various small groupings. She starts to nag him about his share of childcare and chores. 'Nagging' is the name given to women's protests about being overburdened with domestic work.

However in searching through transcripts and notes, the question remains, do women ever articulate their own desires? Their desires for houses and children fit neatly into male desire for support for their careers. Because women learn to validate their lives through men it is more difficult for women to assert individuality, especially having sunk into dependency and childcare. Very few of these women express desires which conflict with their husbands' needs. If they do they think of themselves as being 'selfish'. Many women organise their lives around their husbands' priorities. Because they are usually responsible for childcare this is a major constraint on their excursions and attempts to get back to paid work.

Kate loves to play the cello and organises trips to London, but often gives up when childcare arrangements collapse. Janet goes to art galleries and pays childminders to take care of the twins all day. Rose does supply teaching when she can get it. Meg is doing an OU course in psychology. Carole has studied to be a masseuse so she can work at home. There are many examples of women trying to live out some of their own desires.

Overall, however, their demands are modest and do not put too much strain on their husbands.

Women's talk

Apart from the issue about staying at home with young children, most women were undogmatic about childcare philosophy. It was almost never mentioned. The mechanics of potty training and weaning babies were constantly on the agenda, but the whole philosophy of life underlying the organisation of the middle class family was largely unexplored. Even when I tried to probe underlying issues, women often avoided confronting the reality of family organisation. They would explain how much their husband participated in the work of family life almost without comment. (Single parent mothers, however, were fully prepared to comment on their ex-husbands' inadequacies.) Generally the style of talk was unassertive, diffuse and amiable with certain aspects of the personal life definitely on the agenda while others were taboo.

Men's talk

When men talked to me, it was quite different. No men discussed depression as part of family life but they did discuss ambition and careers. Men are certainly more rhetorical and confident. There was a range of awareness between men like Malcolm who found it difficult to talk to me and allow his personal life into the conversation, and others like Barry who was more straightforward and less anxious about revealing his personal life. But all the men used some kind of rhetoric about the family and the role of their wives - sometimes at considerable length. Men also speculated on how women felt, whereas the women did not often try to do

that about men. Almost invariably the men suggested positive feelings for women about staying at home and positive responses which women had to childcare.

CHAPTER 11

CONCLUSION

In this study of a middle class community I have considered the suggestion that the lives of men and women are becoming more equal. This has been the assumption underlying changes in divorce laws relating to maintenance and custody of children (see Introduction). It has also been suggested by writers interested in changes in fatherhood (McKee & O'Brian 1982, Pleck 1981).

In order to research these ideas I looked closely at family life in a middle class community. I listened to wives and to husbands talking about their lives especially about childrearing and marital relationships. I found husbands concerned with their careers which left fatherhood as a role to be negotiated within narrow limits. I found motherhood to be almost inescapably a full-time commitment for those women with young children in this community.

In these two sections on motherhood and fatherhood I concentrated on highlighting tensions and contradictions to see how these were resolved. For women, those contradictions which were not repressed were almost invariably resolved in ways which maintained them at home as wives and mothers. To struggle out of this position sometimes led to the breakdown of the marriage. For men the apparent agreement between themselves and their wives to prioritise their careers meant that their ability to manoeuvre timetables to include childcare and housework was quite limited. This made the wife a necessary resource at home.

In trying to consider other aspects of equality in the home I looked at family finance, marital power and decision making, sexuality and post-divorce arrangements. These issues had all emerged from reading as

possible areas within which equality could be examined and considered.

Once again, indications of equality were difficult to discover. Even after

divorce, women who worked full-time were poorer, and worn out from juggling childcare and employment. Their ex-husbands did not suffer from the same limitations, although some missed daily contact with their children.

In looking for some explanations for continuing inequality, I considered some people's relationships with their parents and how they understood their parents' lives. There was no simple way in which they had appropriated ideas and patterns from parents. There were all sorts of models of relationships between parents, and many examples of working mothers. The people on the Denton Estate often lived more sex-stereotyped middle class lives than their parents, and the sexual division of labour often seemed less flexible.

All the above description indicated very little similarity between the lives of men and women, and yet there continued to be a language of equality, mainly articulated by men, who used it as part of the justification and explanation about their lives. Women rarely spontaneously spoke about equality.

It is not appropriate to draw universal conclusions about equality from looking at a small group of people all of whom are at a stage of their lives when their children are young and need constant attention. This was certainly the situation when I began this study in 1980. However now in 1988 only Meg has progressed in terms of a career; she is an educational psychologist. Most of the other women are still at home, either unwilling or unable to get back into the job market. This means that they remain financially dependent on their husbands. All the divorced women are continuing in their employment as before at the same level.

At the end of this study I would suggest that many of the fathers do enjoy closer relationships with their children. Commitment to careers has really not been undermined by these relationships but, as there is a greater likelihood of divorce, that may have affected the quality of men's relationship with their children. Also the social idea of equality has meant that the authoritarian father is becoming less acceptable to women.

For women, if changes are taking place, they are proceeding slowly in this section of the middle class. The language of equality conceals a continuing division of labour which still prioritises the male career and leaves her with the domestic labour while he is often too busy to help.

To pretend there is a choice where no real choice exists, to be able to exploit domestic services and not have to provide them in return, to bring up children to fulfil sexual stereotypes - all these indicate to me that the relations of domination between men and women continue to be reflected in different lives. However the dissembling and denial is expressed through a commitment to and a language of equality. Men do not have to live out the equality about which they speak because women are still prepared to fulfil a domestic role. This may be changing among other sections of the middle class, but on the Denton Estate the sanctity of the male career continues to mesmerise a generation of men and women. The resulting financial dependency of women on men undermines any genuine equality in marriage especially if it continues over a span of years. The language of equality means that neither men nor women have to face up to the relations of domination, social, financial and psychological, which really underlie relationships between the sexes. Individual women who do face these ideas often end up struggling through divorce and feeling inadequate because they did not make a success of their marriage. This may all change if future generations of women feel a sense of entitlement that

they deserve children and paid work and domestic services. This also depends on future generations of men being prepared or being forced to contemplate the full implications of equality, and provide some of the services that they now expect from their wives.

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